

three decades of CDC experience, would be taking over (again) as acting director, employees were very happy to hear the news. (Sun, 2/1)

### **The New York Times: Director Of Veterans Hospital Accused Of Manipulating Ratings Is Replaced**

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced on Thursday it would replace the director of its medical center in Roseburg, Ore., Douglas Paxton. He had come under fire in recent weeks for limiting the number of patients the center admitted in an effort to improve its dismal performance rating, according to doctors at the hospital. "There are times that facility leadership needs to change in order to usher in a new approach that will demonstrate we are committed to delivering results for veterans," Dr. Carolyn Clancy, executive in charge of the Veterans Health Administration, said in a statement. (Philipps, 2/1)

### **The Washington Post: Wisconsin Expected To Set Up 'Green Alerts' For Missing At-Risk Veterans**

Wisconsin is expected to become the first state to set up a "Green Alert" system to help families and law enforcement officials locate missing at-risk veterans. Advocates say they hope other states soon adopt Green Alerts, which are similar to the Amber and Silver alerts for missing children and older adults. The legislation unanimously passed the Wisconsin state Senate and is likely to pass the state Assembly in February, as first reported by The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. (Wax-Thibodeaux, 2/1)

### **Bloomberg: Purdue's Oxycontin Targeted At Judge's Opioid Summit**

Local governments pressing lawsuits to hold pharmaceutical companies responsible for the opioid epidemic told a judge that taking the strongest version of Purdue Pharma Inc.'s Oxycontin painkiller off the market would have immediate results in addressing the crisis, according to people at the meeting. Purdue's 80-milligram version of Oxycontin is snorted by thousands of abusers, so removing it would be a good first step, experts for cities and counties and state attorneys general told U.S. District Judge Dan Polster, according to three people in attendance at the Wednesday meeting. They spoke on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly about the closed-door summit. (Feeley, 2/2)

### **Reuters: New York Accuses Insys Of Deceptively Marketing Opioid**

Insys Therapeutics Inc.'s legal woes deepened on Thursday as New York's attorney general filed a lawsuit seeking at least \$75 million from the company, which he said deceptively promoted a fentanyl-based cancer pain medicine for unsafe uses. New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman alleged that the Chandler, Arizona-based

drugmaker recklessly marketed its product Subsyst for wider uses than the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved and bribed doctors to prescribe it. (2/1)

### **Los Angeles Times: Orange County's Only Needle Exchange Shuts Down After Santa Ana Denies Permit**

Orange County's first and only needle exchange program has shut down after Santa Ana city officials denied its permit application, a move some local advocacy groups and the state's leading public health agency say could negatively affect public welfare. However, the city contends the move was necessary because of an increased number of discarded syringes in the Santa Ana Civic Center, for which it says the needle exchange was at fault. (Brazil, 2/1)

### **Stat: Flu Vaccine Provided Low Protection Against This Winter's Virus, Data Suggest**

As the country battles an especially fierce flu season, experts have struggled to explain why one family of virus — the influenza A virus H3N2 — that has infected a lot of people in recent years is causing so much damage again this winter. Now, new data from north of the border sheds some light on the question. Canadian influenza researchers reported Thursday in the online journal Eurosurveillance that the first reckoning of how well the flu vaccine is protecting against H3N2 viruses this year in North America has a dismal answer: not very. (Branswell, 2/1)

### **The Hill: New York Governor: Flu Season Worsens Each Week**

New York's historic flu season is continuing to worsen every week, Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D) said Thursday. Cuomo said the state confirmed more than 11,600 cases of influenza reported to the health department over the past week, with more than 2,200 people hospitalized. (Weixel, 2/1)

### **The Washington Post: When Brett Favre Sees Little Kids Playing Football, 'I Cringe.'**

Sometime on Saturday morning, Brett Favre will do a small favor for an old friend and former backup, stepping up to deliver a pep talk to Doug Pederson's Eagles before Super Bowl LII. But it's the dangerous side of football that preoccupies Favre the most these days. "I cringe," he said, "when I see video, or I= 2m driving and I see little kids out playing, and they're all decked out in their football gear and the helmet looks like it's three times bigger than they are. It's kind of funny, but it's 9s not as funny now as it was years ago, because of what we know now. I just cringe seeing a fragile little boy get tackled and the people ooh and ahh and they just don't know. Or they don't care. It's 0s just so scary." (Boren, 2/1)

**The New York Times: Gut Microbes Combine To Cause Colon Cancer, Study Suggests**

Two types of bacteria commonly found in the gut work together to fuel the growth of colon tumors, researchers reported on Thursday. Their study, published in the journal Science, describes what may be a hidden cause of colon cancer, the third most common cancer in the United States. The research also adds to growing evidence that gut bacteria modify the body's immune system in unexpected and sometimes deadly ways. (Kolata, 2/1)

**NPR: Her Seizures Looked Like Epilepsy, But Her Brain Looked Fine**

When Sarah Jay had her first seizure, she was in her mid-20s and working a high-stress job at a call center in Springfield, Mo. "I was going to go on break," she says. "I was heading towards the bathroom and then I fell and passed out." An ambulance took Jay to the hospital but doctors there couldn't find anything wrong. Jay figured it was a one-time thing. Then a week later, she had another seizure. And that kept happening once or twice a week. "So I was put on short-term disability for my work to try to figure out what was going on," says Jay, who's now 29. (Hamilton, 2/1)

**The New York Times: 'My Baby Almost Died': Formula Scandal Sends Shudders Through France**

When the French dairy giant Lactalis began recalling baby formula, Ségolène Noviant thought she was safe. The milk she had been feeding her 5-month-old son wasn't on the list. Then her son, Noan, was rushed to the emergency room with a fever, diarrhea and internal bleeding. His formula was tainted with salmonella — and a broad range of other Lactalis powdered milk products still on the shelves were at risk, too. (Alderman, 2/1)

**Los Angeles Times: California's Mentally Ill Inmate Population Keeps Growing. And State Money Isn't Enough To Meet Needs, Lawmaker Says**

Gov. Jerry Brown has earmarked \$117 million in his new state budget to expand the number of treatment beds and mental health programs for more than 800 mentally ill inmates found incompetent to stand trial. State officials said they have struggled to keep up with the needs of a population that has jumped in size by 33% over the last three years, as judges are increasingly referring defendants to treatment. But one state lawmaker says additional funds are not enough. (Ulloa, 2/2)

**The Associated Press: Feds To Pay \$42M To Parents Of Boy Hurt By Forceps Delivery**

The federal government has withdrawn its appeal and agreed to pay \$42 million to the parents of a young Pennsylvania boy left disabled from brain injuries apparently caused by the use of forceps during his birth, the parents' lawyers and the government

announced Thursday. "The government recognized that their issues on appeal were without merit and that the verdict was just and appropriate," said Regan Safier, of Kline & Specter, a Philadelphia law firm. "The judge recognized the catastrophic injuries suffered by this child and awarded the money necessary to care for him over his lifetime." (2/1)

**The Associated Press: Nurses With A Mission: Send Older ER Patients Home With Help**

When 86-year-old Carol Wittwer took a taxi to the emergency room, she expected to be admitted to the hospital. She didn't anticipate being asked if she cooks for herself. If she has friends in her high-rise. Or if she could spell lunch backward. "H-C-N-U-L," she said, ruling out a type of confusion called delirium for the geriatrics-trained nurse who was posing the questions in a special wing of Northwestern Memorial Hospital's emergency department. Wittwer's care is part of a new approach to older patients as U.S. emergency rooms adapt to serve the complex needs of a graying population. (2/2)

**The Washington Post: Virginia General Assembly Likely To Legalize Broad Medical Use Of Cannabis Oil**

A bill that would allow physicians to broadly prescribe a form of medical marijuana received preliminary approval in the Virginia House of Delegates on Thursday and seems likely to become law, its sponsors say, after years of failed attempts. The legislation, HB 1251, would permit the use of non-hallucinogenic marijuana or cannabis extracts known as cannabidiol oil or THC-A oil to treat any diagnosed condition or disease. Scientific studies indicate that the oils can reduce nausea and alleviate pain, and also may slow the growth of and kill some cancer cells. (Sullivan, 2/1)

**The Associated Press: UAE Gives Johns Hopkins \$50M For New Stroke Care Institute**

The United Arab Emirates says it's making a \$50 million gift to Johns Hopkins University for a new institute for stroke research in Baltimore and in Abu Dhabi. The UAE ambassador to the U.S., Yousef Al Otaiba, released a statement in partnership with Johns Hopkins on Thursday ahead of a planned announcement in New York. The statement says the Sheikh Khalifa Stroke Institute in Baltimore and Abu Dhabi will focus efforts by Johns Hopkins' to develop new tools for stroke diagnosis, treatment and patient recovery. (2/1)

**Los Angeles Times: L.A.'s Homelessness Surged 75% In Six Years. Here's Why The Crisis Has Been Decades In The Making**

Some of the poorest people in the city spend their days in the shadow of Los Angeles City Hall, napping on flattened cardboard boxes. On any given day, as many as 20 people take to the City Hall lawn, across the street from LAPD headquarters. They're

there to "escape the madness" in downtown streets, a 53-year-old homeless man named Lazarus said last week. At night, they fan out to doorways or deserted plazas to wait for daybreak. (Holland, 2/1)

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## First Edition

**Tuesday, March 06, 2018**

Visit Kaiser Health News for the latest headlines

Today's early morning highlights from the major news organizations.

### **Kaiser Health News: CMS Issues Split Decision On Arkansas Medicaid Waiver**

The Trump administration on Monday approved Arkansas' request for a Medicaid work requirement but deferred a decision on the state's request to roll back its Medicaid expansion that has added 300,000 adults to the program. Arkansas had sought to reduce the number of people eligible for Medicaid by allowing only those with incomes below the federal poverty level, or about \$12,140 for an individual, to qualify. For the past four years, Arkansas Medicaid covered everyone with incomes under 138 percent of the poverty level, or about \$16,750. The new policy would have cut the number of people eligible for Medicaid in the state by about 60,000 people. (Galewitz, 3/5)

### **Kaiser Health News: At New Health Office, 'Civil Rights' Means Doctors' Right To Say No To Patients**

The Trump administration is embarking on a sweeping effort to redefine civil rights in health care, with critics accusing the Department of Health and Human Services of sidestepping the rights of patients to soothe a far smaller constituency: conservative nurses, hospitals and other caregivers. The department's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has been greatly strengthening and expanding protections for health care providers who have religious- or conscience-based objections to procedures such as abortion. (Huetteman, 3/5)

**Kaiser Health News: From The ER To Inpatient Care — At Home**

Phyllis Petruzzelli spent the week before Christmas struggling to breathe. When she went to the emergency department on Dec. 26, the doctor at Brigham and Women's Faulkner Hospital near her home in Boston's Jamaica Plain neighborhood said she had pneumonia and needed hospitalization. Then the doctor proposed something that made Petruzzelli nervous. Instead of being admitted to the hospital, she could go back home and let the hospital come to her. As a "hospital-at-home" patient, Petruzzelli, 71 this week, learned doctors and nurses would come to her home twice a day and perform any needed tests or bloodwork. (Andrews, 3/6)

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**California Healthline: What Medicaid Pays For Education Services At U.S. Public Schools**

Gerardo Alejandre used to punch classmates, throw chairs and curse at his teachers, conduct that forced him to switch from school to school. "I had a lot of anger issues," the 16-year-old said recently. Then Gerardo entered a class at Oakland Technical High School for students who have mental health or behavior issues. In that classroom, the teacher gets support from Erich Roberts, a psychiatric social worker assigned to the group. Oakland Unified School District bills Medicaid, the nation's insurance program for low-income residents, for Roberts' services. (Gorman and Heredia Rodriguez, 3/6)

**California Healthline: States Strive To Curb Costs For A Crucial — But Exorbitant — Hemophilia Treatment**

The child is well-known in the halls where state bureaucrats oversee health care for millions of Californians — not by name, but by a number: \$21 million. His medications alone cost state taxpayers that much in a single year, not including other health care. The boy, whose identity has not been released, was California's most expensive Medicaid patient in recent years. His case was singled out in a tweet last year by the state's top health care official to highlight the public insurance program's extraordinary obligations as a backstop for low-income patients. (Ostrov, 3/5)

**California Healthline: User-Friendly Or Error-Ridden? Debate Swirls Around Website Comparing Nursing Homes**

Earlier this year, the state Department of Public Health launched a new website, Cal Health Find, intended to help people compare the quality of nursing homes and other health care facilities. Now, California nursing home advocates are calling on the state to take it down, saying the new site is incomplete, inaccurate and "a huge step in the wrong direction." (Wiener, 3/5)

### **The Associated Press: Work Requirement Approved For Arkansas' Medicaid Expansion**

The Trump administration on Monday approved Arkansas' plan to require thousands of people on its Medicaid expansion program to work or volunteer, making Arkansas the third state allowed to impose such restrictions on health care coverage for the poor. Gov. Asa Hutchinson announced that the requirement for Arkansas' program, which uses Medicaid funds to purchase private insurance for low-income residents, had been approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. More than 285,000 people are on the Arkansas program, which was created as an alternative to expanding traditional Medicaid under the federal health law. (3/5)

### **The New York Times: Trump Administration Delays Decision On Scaling Back Medicaid In Arkansas**

[T]he administration held off on approving another request from the state that could have much broader consequences for the future of the program — a proposal to cut back the expansion of Medicaid that was instituted under the Affordable Care Act. Seema Verma, the Trump appointee who oversees Medicaid, did not elaborate when asked twice about the delay at a news conference with Gov. Asa Hutchinson in Little Rock. She said only: "We are still working through some issues in that particular area." (Goodnough, 3/5)

### **CNN: Thousands Of Arkansas Medicaid Recipients Must Start Working In June**

Arkansas will roll out the work requirement in stages. This year, only enrollees age 30 to 49 will be subject to the work mandate, which will be broadened to include 19- to 29-year-olds in 2019. Up to 39,000 recipients could be affected this year, according to Arkansas' Department of Human Services. (Luhby, 3/5)

### **The Washington Post: Arkansas Wins Federal Permission To Impose Medicaid Work Requirements**

While seeking new conditions for some Arkansans to qualify for Medicaid, the state made a novel request last year: One of the few Southern states to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, it told federal officials that it wanted to partly retreat. Instead of including people with incomes up to 138 percent of the federal poverty line, as designed in the ACA, Arkansas wanted to set its expansion limit at 100 percent of poverty — a change that would jettison an estimated 60,000 people from the program. (Goldstein, 3/5)

### **The New York Times: Bring Back The Asylums? Critics Fear A New Wave Of Abuse**

In the wake of the horrific school shootings in Parkland, Fla., President Trump has called repeatedly for building or reopening mental institutions. Strangely, perhaps, he



has echoed an argument made by some experts who study the mental health care system. It's not that they believe that having more institutions would somehow prevent spree killings, as Mr. Trump apparently does. The majority of these murderers appear to be angry, antisocial individuals — with access to guns — whom the mental health system probably could not have spotted in advance. (Carey, 3/5)

**The Associated Press: Florida Senators Pass Gun Restrictions; House Yet To Act**

In response to a deadly Florida school shooting last month, the state's Senate narrowly passed a bill that would create new restrictions on rifle sales and allow some teachers to carry guns in schools. The 20-18 vote came Monday evening after three hours of often emotional debate. Support and opposition crossed party lines, and it was clear many of those who voted for the bill weren't entirely happy with it. (3/6)

**Los Angeles Times: Florida State Senate Passes A Marjory Stoneman Douglas Gun Control Act — And Some Call It An Insult To Its Namesake**

Senate Bill 7026, named the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act, would raise the age to purchase a firearm from 18 to 21, require a three-day waiting period for most gun purchases, and ban the sale or possession of "bump stocks," which allow semiautomatic rifles to fire faster. (Jarvie, 3/5)

**The Associated Press: Oregon Governor Signs First Gun Law Since Florida Massacre**

A bill prohibiting domestic abusers and people under restraining orders from owning firearms became America's first new gun control law since the Feb. 14 Florida high school massacre. "Well done Oregon," Democratic Gov. Kate Brown exclaimed Monday after signing the law on the steps of the state Capitol as some 200 people, including victims of domestic abuse and high school students, applauded and cheered. (3/6)

**The Hill: Trump's Health Chief Warns Hospital Execs About Health Care Costs: 'Change Is Coming'**

President Trump's new health secretary issued a warning Monday to a room of hospital executives about soaring health care costs: change is coming, whether you like it or not. Speaking at the Federation of American Hospitals convention in D.C., Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar laid out a series of actions the administration will take that are aimed at lowering health care costs, and warned that it wouldn't be deterred by powerful special interests. (Hellmann, 3/5)

**CQ: Blunt: Policy Issues Bedevil Labor, Health, Education Bill**

Extra funding for health, education and labor programs in the fiscal 2018 omnibus package depends on whether lawmakers can iron out policy differences between the

House and Senate bills, a top GOP negotiator said Monday. ... CQ reported last week that a dispute over about \$3 billion in offsets known as changes in mandatory programs, or "CHIMPs," to free up more discretionary spending in the Labor-HHS-Education bill remains an outstanding issue for lawmakers working to construct a catchall omnibus spending bill for fiscal 2018. (Mejdrich, 3/5)

#### **The Hill: Jon Stewart Makes Capitol Hill Appearance For 9/11 Bill**

Former late-night host Jon Stewart joined New York lawmakers on Monday to call on the White House to withdraw a proposal to reorganize the health-care program for 9/11 first responders. ...The Trump administration is considering a reorganization that would move the 9/11 health-care program from oversight by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), a worker safety agency. (Sullivan, 3/5)

#### **The Hill: Sanders Says New Health-Care Plan Shows Dems Moving Toward 'Medicare For All'**

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) said Monday that he thinks a new health-care plan from a Democratic think tank shows that the party is moving toward his position on health care. Asked if he thinks the plan from the Center for American Progress (CAP), which comes very close to Sanders's signature idea of "Medicare for all," shows the Democratic Party is moving his way, Sanders told The Hill, "Yes, I do." (Sullivan, 3/5)

#### **The New York Times: Can This Judge Solve The Opioid Crisis?**

Here are a few choice mutterings from the scrum of lawyers outside Courtroom 18B, about the federal judge who summoned them to a closed-door conference on hundreds of opioid lawsuits: "Grandstander." "Pollyanna." "Over his head." And the chorus: "This is not how we do things!" (Hoffman, 3/5)

#### **The Washington Post: FDA Chief Wants More Mail Inspectors To Stem Opioid Influx**

The head of the Food and Drug Administration wants to more than double the number of packages his agency inspects for illicit drugs, an effort to stem a deadly flow of opioids that increasingly runs through the international mail supply. FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb said Monday he needs more staffers to intercept opioids that are being disguised as other drugs and supplements. (Perrone, 3/5)

#### **The Hill: Manchin Unveils Bill To Change Controversial Opioid Enforcement Law**

Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) unveiled legislation Monday aimed at helping the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) improve its ability to stop suspicious shipments of opioids from flooding communities. Manchin's bill changes a law that drew a firestorm of criticism after an explosive "60 Minutes"-Washington Post joint investigation

reported the bill made it harder for the DEA to freeze opioid shipments from drug companies in the midst of a full-blown crisis. (Roubein, 3/5)

### **Stat: Proposed Limits To Opioid Prescriptions Draw Opposition From Docs, Patients**

In the final hours of public input on a controversial new rule limiting opioid prescriptions, a last-minute coalition emerged on Monday to oppose it. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services rule would restrict opioid doses to Medicare patients to the equivalent of 90 milligrams of morphine per day. (Facher, 3/6)

### **The New York Times: Overshadowed By The Opioid Crisis: A Comeback By Cocaine**

The opioid epidemic just keeps getting worse, presenting challenges discussed at length at a White House summit last week. But opioids are not America's only significant drug problem. Among illicit drugs, cocaine is the No. 2 killer and claims the lives of more African-Americans than heroin does. In a recent study published in The Archives of Internal Medicine, researchers from the National Cancer Institute and the National Institute on Drug Abuse found that drug-related deaths have grown across all racial groups and among both men and women. The analysis found that between 1999 and 2015, overdose deaths of any kind of drug for Americans 20 to 64 years old increased 5.5 percent per year. (Frakt, 3/5)

### **The Wall Street Journal: Opioid Maker Insys Still Has Fans On Wall Street**

Insys Therapeutics has lost its former CEO and co-founder, John Kapoor, and several top executives, all charged with conspiracy to illegally distribute an addictive prescription painkiller. The company has lost more than 80% of its market cap since its peak price in 2015 amid declining sales and multiple lawsuits from states over how it marketed Subsys, a mouth-spray version of the potent opioid painkiller fentanyl that is approved by the Food and Drug Administration to treat cancer-related pain. (Prang, 3/5)

### **The Associated Press: Mom Who Had Heroin-Addicted Baby Gets 30 Years For His Death**

A Baltimore woman whose baby was likely born addicted to heroin and survived only nine days will serve 30 years in prison. The Office of the State's Attorney for Baltimore City said in a Monday release Anne Kirsch was sentenced to 75 years in prison, with 45 suspended, after she was convicted of manslaughter and child abuse resulting in death in 2017. (3/5)

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### **The Washington Post: Babies With Down Syndrome Are Put On Center Stage In The U.S. Abortion Fight**

Karianne Lisonbee stepped up to the lectern to talk about what she called "a terrible form of discrimination." The Republican state representative in Utah had just introduced a bill that would make it a crime for a doctor to perform an abortion if a woman is seeking one "solely" because the fetus has Down syndrome. "In recent years, there has been a shocking increase in abortions performed for no other reason than because a prenatal test identified the potential for a trait a parent didn't like," she said at the news conference last month. (Cha, 3/5)

### **The Associated Press: West Virginia House Opposes Constitutional Abortion Rights**

West Virginia lawmakers say the main goal of a constitutional amendment they are proposing is to end Medicaid funding for abortions — but opponents say the change could lead to a future ban on abortions altogether. The House on Monday voted 73-25 to pass the resolution, which was approved by the Senate a month ago and will now go before voters in a November referendum. (3/5)

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### **The Washington Post: Many Type 2 Diabetics Can Relax Their Blood Sugar Control, Doctors Group Says**

Many of the nation's 29 million people with Type 2 diabetes should relax their blood sugar control, an influential physicians group recommended Monday, arguing that the current standard is causing substantial harm without commensurate benefits. But the American Diabetes Association, the leading organization in the fight against the condition, said it disagrees with the new recommendation from the American College of Physicians and would not change its advice that Type 2 diabetics pursue tighter blood glucose control. (Bernstein, 3/5)

### **NPR: The American College Of Physicians Recommends A1C Levels Between 7 And 8 Percent**

Half a dozen medical groups have looked carefully at the best treatment guidelines for the 29 million Americans who have Type 2 diabetes and have come up with somewhat differing guidelines. The American College of Physicians has reviewed those guidelines to provide its own recommendations, published in the Annals of Internal Medicine. It has decided that less stringent goals are appropriate for the key blood sugar test, called the A1C. "There are harms associated with overzealous treatment or inappropriate treatment focused on A1C targets," says Dr. Jack Ende, president of the ACP. "And for

that reason, this is not the kind of situation where the college could just sit back and ignore things." (Harris, 3/5)

**The Wall Street Journal: Common 'Superbug' Found To Disguise Resistance To Potent Antibiotic**

Some common "superbugs" appear to harbor a little-known type of resistance to a last-resort antibiotic, a new study shows, suggesting a worrying new way in which dangerous bacteria can evade one of the few remaining treatment options. Bacterial populations are normally viewed as either totally impervious to an antibiotic, or totally treatable. But researchers from Emory University identified a different pattern in a certain type of drug-resistant bacteria, in which some cells in a bacterial colony are resistant to a last-resort antibiotic called colistin. This "heteroresistance" isn't easily detectable in standard lab tests because most of the cells are susceptible to the drug. (McKay, 3/6)

**The New York Times: Americans Might No Longer Prefer Sons Over Daughters**

Around the world, parents have typically preferred to have sons more than daughters, and American parents have been no different. But there are signs that's changing. It may be because there's less bias against girls, and possibly more bias against boys. Gallup surveyed Americans 10 times from 1941 to 2011, and their answers remained virtually unchanged: If they could have one child, 40 percent would prefer a boy and 28 percent a girl (the rest showed no preference). (Miller, 3/5)

**The Wall Street Journal: How To Spot Teenage Depression**

Is your child's moodiness a sign of typical teenage angst—or the beginning of a depression that needs professional attention? Statistics show that teen depression is on the rise. In 2016, around 13% of U.S. teenagers ages 12-17 had at least one major depressive episode in the past year, compared to almost 8% in 2006, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, which collects this information. Rates for teenagers ages 18 and 19, which are tracked separately, grew as well: More than 11% had a major depressive episode in 2016, compared with 9-10% in 2006. (Bernstein, 3/5)

**The New York Times: For Heart Disease Patients, Think Exercise, Not Weight Loss**

For people with coronary heart disease, losing weight will not prolong life, a new study reports, but increasing physical activity will. To their surprise, Norwegian researchers found that in some coronary heart disease patients — those of normal weight — weight loss actually increased the risk for death. (Bakalar, 3/5)

**The New York Times: Football's Brain Injury Crisis Lands In Family Court**

In this city with a deep and proud relationship with football, a custody dispute has pushed the debate about the sport's safety into a new arena: family court. A father, John Orsini, has gone to court to prevent the youngest of his three sons from playing high school football because, he said, scientific studies have revealed the perils of repeated blows to the head — especially for an athlete, like his son, who has a history of concussions. The boy's mother, Mr. Orsini's ex-wife, believes he should be allowed to continue playing because he understands the risks. (Belson, 3/5)

**The Washington Post: Irma Nursing Home Deaths: Backup Power Rule OK'd In Florida**

Florida's Legislature has approved a rule requiring backup power sources in the state's nursing homes, prompted by the deaths of several residents at a sweltering nursing home in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma. The state House and Senate both unanimously okayed the measure Monday and it now heads to the desk of Gov. Rick Scott, who is expected to sign it. The measure would require facilities to have a generator capable of keeping facilities at 81 degrees Fahrenheit (27 degrees Celsius) or lower for at least four days. It also requires them to keep 72 hours of fuel on site. (Reedy, 3/5)

**The Associated Press: Judge Delves Into Science Behind Roundup Cancer Claim**

A federal judge on Monday waded into the arcane science behind claims that the widely used weed killer Roundup can cause cancer. The expected weeklong testimony is intended to help him determine whether a jury should hear from doctors who link the product to non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. U.S. District Judge Vince Chhabria heard from an epidemiologist at the University of California, Los Angeles about how she evaluated scientific studies of glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup, to arrive at her conclusion that it can cause cancer. (Thanawala, 3/5)

**The Associated Press: 3 Day Care Workers Charged With Giving Children Melatonin**

Police in suburban Chicago say three day care workers are charged with giving children gummy bears containing the sleep aid melatonin. Des Plaines police said Monday that officers were called to Kiddie Junction on Friday. Police said the children were given the melatonin "in an effort to calm them down before nap time." Authorities say parents hadn't given permission for their children to receive the melatonin. Police contacted parents and no children were sickened. (3/5)

**The Associated Press: Lawmakers Want Say In 3M Settlement Dollars**

Republican lawmakers on Monday questioned the structure of a multimillion-dollar settlement between the state of Minnesota and 3M Co., arguing they should have a say

in how the money is used to ensure it doesn't become "consumed by bureaucracy."  
The company agreed to pay the state \$850 million last month to resolve a massive lawsuit in which the state alleged some of the company's chemicals damaged natural resources and groundwater in the Twin Cities' eastern metropolitan area. (3/5)

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#### **ADMINISTRATION NEWS**

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- 7. Some Transgender Troops Can Continue To Serve Under Trump's New Policy, But New Recruits Are Banned**
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#### **PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION**



- 9. Change To Ban On CDC Gun Research 'Meaningless' Without Funding, Researchers Say**
- 10. Funds Included In Spending Bill To Fight 'Cataclysmic' Opioid Crisis Not Nearly Enough, Advocates Say**
- 11. Public Education Efforts Not Moving The Needle In Fight Against Obesity**

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#### PHARMACEUTICALS

- 12. 'Right To Try' Bill Focuses On Sidestepping FDA, But In Reality It's Drugmakers That Are Usually Ones Saying 'No'**

#### QUALITY

- 13. From Nightmarish Scenarios To Inspirational Moments: Experts Share Stories About Quality Of Care In U.S. System**

#### MEDICAID

- 14. Debate Over Medicaid Rule Changes May Torpedo Mississippi's Budget Talks**

#### STATE WATCH

- 15. State Highlights: Bill Allowing Family Members To Visit Ill Relatives Makes Strides In States; New N.J. Medical School Aims To Reverse Talent Drain**

#### EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

- 16. Different Takes: March Showed Time Is Up For Gun Lobby; Gonzalez's Silence During Speech Was Thundering**
- 17. Viewpoints: Yes, An Abortion Ban Proposal In Ohio Is Unconstitutional. But ...; GOP Attack On Medicaid Is Backfiring**

### **From Kaiser Health News:**

#### KAISER HEALTH NEWS ORIGINAL STORIES

- 1. As Trump Targets Immigrants, Elderly Brace To Lose Caregivers**

Families and nursing homes say Trump administration policies threaten to drive immigrants away from caring for older and disabled patients, intensifying a shortage in these low-wage jobs. (Melissa Bailey, 3/26)

## **2. Podcast: KHN's 'What The Health?' Health Law Fix Misses The Spending Bill Train**

In this episode of KHN's "What the Health?" Julie Rovner of Kaiser Health News, Joanne Kenen of Politico, Anna Edney of Bloomberg News and Margot Sanger-Katz of The New York Times discuss the apparent demise of bipartisan legislation aimed at shoring up parts of the Affordable Care Act. They also discuss aggressive new efforts by the Food and Drug Administration to regulate tobacco products. Plus, for extra credit, the panelists offer their favorite health policy stories of the week. (3/23)

## **3. The Juul's So Cool, Kids Smoke It In School**

The teenage smoking sensation appearing on high school campuses across the country is an easy-to-hide, high-nicotine device called the Juul. Educators and health care advocates fear that vulnerable young people may become addicted. (Ana B. Ibarra, 3/26)

## **4. Political Cartoon: 'The Real Thing?'**

Kaiser Health News provides a fresh take on health policy developments with "Political Cartoon: 'The Real Thing?'" by Hilary Price.

Here's today's health policy haiku:

### **A FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH IN PILL FORM?**

Pill makes mice youthful  
Mice lobby for coverage  
Pharma smiles with glee.

- Ernest R. Smith

If you have a health policy haiku to share, please Contact Us and let us know if you want us to include your name. Keep in mind that we give extra points if you link back to a KHN original story.

## **Summaries Of The News:**

### **HEALTH LAW**

#### **5. With Premiums Likely To Spike Just Before Midterms, Lawmakers Are Bracing For Blame Game Battle**

Language on abortion threw a wrench in both sides' plans to add money to stabilize the marketplace into the sweeping spending bill that Congress passed last week. Now they'll have to deal with the potential fallout. Meanwhile, some Americans are opting to take a chance they'll stay healthy over paying astronomical insurance bills.

**The Wall Street Journal: Health-Insurance Premiums Loom As Election Issue**  
Health-insurance premiums are likely to jump right before the November elections, a result of Congress's omission of federal money to shore up insurance exchanges from its new spending package. Lawmakers from both parties had pushed to include the funding in the \$1.3 trillion spending law signed Friday, but they couldn't agree on details. A battle has already begun over how to cast the blame for the expected rate increases. Democrats blame GOP lawmakers for the failure of negotiations over the funding, saying Republican leaders demanded the inclusion of abortion restrictions they knew would be unacceptable to Democrats. Republicans say that they negotiated in good faith and that Democrats rejected reasonable rules on abortion. (Armour, 3/25)

**Bloomberg: Why Some Americans Are Risking It And Skipping Health Insurance**  
Across America there are thousands of people like the Buchanans, the Owenses and the Bobbies making the same hard decision to go without health insurance, despite the benefits. They're risking it—betting that they've got enough savings, enough of a back-up plan, or enough luck to get them through a twisted knee, a cancer, or a car wreck. Bloomberg is following a dozen of these families this year in an effort to understand the trade-offs when a dollar spent on health insurance can't be spent on something else. Some are financially comfortable. Others are scraping by. (Tozzi, 3/26)

And in other news —

**The Baltimore Sun: Maryland Lawmakers Set To Do What Congress Can't: Protect Obamacare With Tax On Insurers**  
Maryland's Republican governor and Democratic legislature have forged a striking bipartisan proposal to accomplish what Washington has failed to do: stabilize

Obamacare. Given the stakes — 150,000 Marylanders potentially losing health insurance in an election year — lawmakers in the General Assembly worked quickly and quietly to try to avert the crisis by agreeing on a new \$380 million tax to stabilize the individual insurance market. (Cox and Dance, 3/23)

#### Nashville Tennessean: Obamacare: Bipartisan Push For Health Insurance Fix Unravels In The Senate

No one thought it would be easy to get Democrats and Republicans on board with a plan to stabilize the nation's volatile health insurance markets. But no one thought those efforts would collapse like this. Months of health-insurance negotiations led by two senators with a track record of producing bipartisan bills ended abruptly last week amid a flurry of finger-pointing and bitter charges by each side that the other was playing politics. (Collins, 3/25)

#### Kaiser Health News: Podcast: KHN's 'What The Health?' Health Law Fix Misses The Spending Bill Train

Congress passed a bill to fund much of the federal government for the remainder of the fiscal year just hours before its March 23 deadline. But not included in that legislation is a bipartisan bill aimed at stabilizing premiums for individuals who buy their own health insurance. That proposal collapsed in partisan rancor after lawmakers were unable to resolve a fight over abortion and other issues. (3/23)

### ADMINISTRATION NEWS

## **6. Trump Wants Shulkin Out As VA Continues To Be Rocked By Turmoil And Rebellion, Sources Say**

Speculation over Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin's fate has been simmering for several weeks after a watchdog report cited inappropriate travel spending. Shulkin has also made waves by accusing those within the agency of trying to undermine him.

The Associated Press: AP Sources: Trump Plans To Oust Shulkin As VA Secretary President Donald Trump is planning to oust embattled Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin amid an extraordinary rebellion at the agency and damaging government investigations into his alleged spending abuses, three administration officials told The Associated Press on Sunday. Two officials said an announcement on Shulkin could happen this week, subject to Trump's final decision as the White House hones in on possible replacements to head the Department of Veterans Affairs. (Yen and Thomas, 3/25)

The Washington Post: Trump May Be Preparing To Make More Administration Personnel Changes

At his coastal resort here, Trump told associates he wants to oust Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin. Christopher Ruddy, the chief executive of Newsmax, talked to the president Saturday and then said on television Sunday that Shulkin is "likely to depart the Cabinet very soon." Ruddy, who speaks to Trump frequently, said on ABC News' "This Week" that the president thinks the White House is operating "like a smooth machine" and that he has been "perplexed" by news reports of chaos. "He did say that he's expecting to make one or two major changes to his government very soon," Ruddy said. (Wagner and Dawsey, 3/25)

## **7. Some Transgender Troops Can Continue To Serve Under Trump's New Policy, But New Recruits Are Banned**

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Under the new policy, troops who require or have had gender reassignment surgery or those with "gender dysphoria" would be disqualified from service — but with some exceptions. The move was promptly assailed by congressional Democrats and civil rights groups, and legal challenges are all-but certain.

The New York Times: Trump Approves New Limits On Transgender Troops In The Military

Transgender troops who are currently in the United States military may remain in the ranks, the White House said late Friday, but the Pentagon could require them to serve according to their gender at birth. The policy recommendation that President Trump approved flatly states that "transgender persons who require or have undergone gender transition are disqualified from military service." But it also largely gives the Pentagon the ability to make exceptions where it sees fit. (Cooper and Gibbons-Neff, 3/24)

The Associated Press: Trump Order Would Ban Most Transgender Troops From Serving

"This new policy will enable the military to apply well-established mental and physical health standards — including those regarding the use of medical drugs — equally to all individuals who want to join and fight for the best military force the world has ever seen," White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Friday. The new policy was promptly assailed by congressional Democrats and civil rights groups. House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi tweeted, "No one with the strength & bravery to serve in the U.S. military should be turned away because of who they are. This hateful

ban is purpose-built to humiliate our brave transgender members of the military who serve with honor & dignity." (Thomas, 3/24)

The Wall Street Journal: Trump Allows Current Transgender Troops But Bans Future Recruits

The administration decision comes amid federal court rulings requiring the Pentagon to maintain a policy of open transgender service. The Justice Department was expected to file at least one motion Friday evening in U.S. District Court in the Western District of Washington state to argue the court should lift an injunction that prevented the Pentagon from banning transgender service members. The Trump administration faces a number of court orders that require the Pentagon to maintain the previous policy until they are reversed. "DoD will continue to comply with court rulings and continue to assess and retain transgender service members," said Maj. Dave Eastburn, a Pentagon spokesman. (Lubold, 3/24)

## **8. Administration's Focus On High-Skilled Immigration Puts Personal Health Care Services In Jeopardy**

In 2017, 26 percent of personal care aides and home health aides were foreign born, and as baby boomers age, the demand for workers in the fast-growing field is only going to increase.

The New York Times: When The Elderly Call For Help, A 'Chain' Immigrant Often Answers

Irma Mangayan was lathering and rinsing a 92-year-old woman in Room 413 one recent afternoon when she received a page from another room. An incontinent resident had an accident, and Ms. Mangayan would have to clean it up. Before her shift was over at Belmont Village Senior Living, Ms. Mangayan would hoist women and men into their wheelchairs, escort residents using walkers downstairs to the dining room and then back and perform myriad other tasks that they once could do for themselves. (Jordan, 3/25)

Kaiser Health News: Trump Immigration Policies Put Immigrant Caregivers And Their Elderly Patients At Risk

After back-to-back, eight-hour shifts at a chiropractor's office and a rehab center, Nirva arrived outside an elderly woman's house just in time to help her up the front steps. Nirva took the woman's arm as she hoisted herself up, one step at a time, taking breaks to ease the pain in her hip. At the top, they stopped for a hug. "Hello, bella," Nirva said, using the word for "beautiful" in Italian. (Bailey, 3/26)

## PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

### **9. Change To Ban On CDC Gun Research 'Meaningless' Without Funding, Researchers Say**

Public health experts are pessimistic there will be any changes following a measure in spending bill that will allow the CDC to study the public health risks involved with guns. Top appropriators in Congress say they have no interest in funding new research.

**NPR: Spending Bill Lets CDC Study Gun Violence; But Researchers Are Skeptical It Will Help**

Government health agencies have spent more than two decades shying away from gun violence research, but some say the new spending bill, signed by President Trump on Friday, will change that. That is because, in agency instructions that accompany the bill, there is a sentence noting that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has the authority to conduct research on the causes of gun violence. "I think this is a huge victory for our country and our communities and our children. This is one step in many to help stop gun violence in this country," says Rep. Stephanie Murphy, a Democrat from the Orlando, Fla., area, where a mass shooting left 49 dead at a gay nightclub in 2016. But researchers who study gun violence are unimpressed. (Greenfieldboyce, 3/23)

**The Hill: Funding Bill Won't Prompt New CDC Gun Research, Experts Say**

Public health experts and former CDC officials say that, unless Congress actually appropriates money for that research, no progress will be made. Democrats have frequently railed against the fact that a 1996 amendment has effectively stopped CDC from researching gun violence. The mass shooting at a Florida high school in February reignited the debate in Congress. Democrats had pushed for a full repeal of the so-called Dickey Amendment, which prohibits the use of federal funding to promote or advocate for gun control, but Republicans did not agree. (Weixel, 3/25)

**The Hill: Top Appropriators Say They See No Need To Specify Funding For Gun Research**

Top appropriators in the House and Senate on Thursday said they are not interested in funding new federal research into the causes of gun violence. Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) and Rep. Tom Cole (R-Okla.) said in separate interviews they don't see the need to give federal research agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) additional money meant to study the causes of gun violence. (Weixel, 3/22)

The Hill: Dem Calls For CDC To Immediately Begin Gun Violence Research  
Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.) is calling on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to begin research into gun violence immediately, following a new clarification from Congress. Markey is calling for the research, long a priority for Democrats, after the new government funding legislation passed by Congress included language clarifying that existing restrictions do not prevent the agency from researching the causes of gun violence, only from actively advocating for gun control (Sullivan, 3/23)

The Washington Post: Tenacious New Gun Researchers Are Determined To Break Cycle Of Mass Shootings

Yifan Zhang was finishing her PhD in biostatistics at Harvard five years ago when news broke of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. As a graduate student from China, specializing in highly technical design of clinical drug trials, she had little connection to America's long-running debate over gun violence. But even now, she said, the anguished faces of those parents she saw on television remain seared in her memory. So when she heard about a gun-violence research project at Stanford University that could use the statistical skills she had honed on pharmaceuticals, she jumped at the chance. (Wan, 3/24)

## **10. Funds Included In Spending Bill To Fight 'Cataclysmic' Opioid Crisis Not Nearly Enough, Advocates Say**

The \$4.6 billion allocated is a record amount for the government. But, by comparison, the U.S. is spending more than \$7 billion annually on discretionary domestic funding on AIDS, an epidemic with a death toll that peaked in 1995 at 43,000. Meanwhile, President Donald Trump has directed federal prisons to use one particular treatment that would benefit a single drugmaker in his plan to battle the crisis, and rural areas are struggling because of a dearth of methadone vans.

The Associated Press: States: Federal Money For Opioid Crisis A Small Step Forward  
The federal government will spend a record \$4.6 billion this year to fight the nation's deepening opioid crisis, which killed 42,000 Americans in 2016. But some advocates say the funding included in the spending plan the president signed Friday is not nearly enough to establish the kind of treatment system needed to reverse the crisis. A White House report last fall put the cost to the country of the overdose epidemic at more than \$500 billion a year. (Mulvihill, 3/25)

Stat: Trump Opioid Plan Writes In Favoritism To Vivitrol Over Other Medications  
The White House's national strategy to combat the opioid crisis, unveiled last week, would expand a particular kind of addiction treatment in federal criminal justice settings:



a single drug, manufactured by a single company, with mixed views on the evidence regarding its use. Federal prisons should "facilitate naltrexone treatment and access to treatment" to inmates as they transition out of incarceration, according to a fact sheet circulated by the administration. A White House spokesman later confirmed to STAT that the document referred specifically to naltrexone in its injectable form. (Facher, 3/26)

**Stateline: Federal Ban On Methadone Vans Seen As Barrier To Treatment**  
From California to Vermont, mobile methadone vans have served people with opioid addiction in rural towns and underserved inner-city neighborhoods for nearly three decades. But the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, which regulates dispensing of the FDA-approved addiction medicine, has refused to license any new methadone vans since 2007 over concerns about potential diversion of the medication. Now, in an unrelenting opioid epidemic that is killing more than a hundred Americans every day, some state and local addiction agencies are asking the federal government to lift its moratorium as quickly as possible. (Vestal, 3/23)

And in other news on the epidemic —

**Pioneer Press: Penny-Per-Pill Fee To Combat Opioid Crisis Pulled From House Bill**  
The sponsor of a House bill to boost Minnesota's fight against opioid abuse has stripped a penny-per-pill fee from the plan in hopes of keeping the legislation alive. State Rep. Dave Baker, a Republican from Wilmar whose son Dan died of a drug overdose, has been a strong advocate of such a fee on prescription opioids to help battle the growing problem of overdoses. (Magan, 3/23)

**Pioneer Press: Opioid Shortages Leave Minnesota Hospitals Looking For Alternatives**  
Hospitals across Minnesota have been scrambling to cope with a nationwide shortage of injectable opioid painkillers. "The supply is just inconsistent," said Gina Lemke, pharmacy director at St. Luke's hospital in Duluth. "We can't place an order and trust that it's going to arrive." Given the effort to cut down on the number of opioids that are prescribed, it may seem ironic that there's a shortage of some opioids used in an injectable form. But in that setting, opioids still perform a needed function, pharmacists say. (Lundy, 3/23)

**New Orleans Times-Picayune: Louisiana House To Consider Bill Helping Infants Born Addicted To Opioids**  
The youngest victims of the opioid epidemic in Louisiana could be helped by a proposal headed for a full vote at the House of Representatives on March 29. Authored by Sen. Walt Leger, HB 658 proposes the creation of a neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) pilot project within the state's Department of Health. Infants born with this condition

often experience withdrawal after birth, resulting in side effects such as sweating, trembling, vomiting, seizures and trouble sleeping. The project aims to establish a multi-disciplinary team within the department that will guide best treatment options for babies born in withdrawal from opiates. (Clark, 3/24)

**San Francisco Chronicle: Federal Funding Boost For Opioid Crisis Not Nearly Enough, Critics Say**

The federal government will spend a record \$4.6 billion this year to fight the nation's deepening opioid crisis, which killed 42,000 Americans in 2016. But some advocates say the funding included in the spending plan the president signed Friday is not nearly enough to establish the kind of treatment system needed to reverse the crisis. (Mulvihill, 3/25)

**Cleveland Plain Dealer: Research, Jobs Among Opioid Crisis Solutions Touted In Ohio**  
Days after President Donald Trump announced he wanted tougher penalties for drug dealers and stronger border protection, two Trump administration officials announced new federal money for addiction research and job training for people affected by the opioid crisis and those working in mental health and addiction services. Meanwhile, Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine touted the benefits of chiropractic care and alternative therapies to manage pain. (Borchardt, 3/23)

## **11. Public Education Efforts Not Moving The Needle In Fight Against Obesity**

"Most people know that being overweight or obese is unhealthy, and if you eat too much that contributes to being overweight," said Dr. James Krieger. "But just telling people there's a problem doesn't solve it." In other public health news: why certain people don't get sick, baby talk, birth control apps, suicide, and worker death.

**The New York Times: American Adults Just Keep Getting Fatter**

American adults continue to put on the pounds. New data shows that nearly 40 percent of them were obese in 2015 and 2016, a sharp increase from a decade earlier, federal health officials reported Friday. The prevalence of severe obesity in American adults is also rising, heightening their risks of developing heart disease, diabetes and various cancers. According to the latest data, published Friday in JAMA, 7.7 percent of American adults were severely obese in the same period. (Richtel and Jacobs, 3/23)

**The Wall Street Journal: Why Do Some People Get Sick Less Often?**

You know who you are: the person who had perfect attendance, the one who never gets the nasty cold going around the office. Some people seem to be immune to whatever's taking hold of their friends and neighbors, while others move from one bout

of cold to another with little reprieve. Two experts, Sheldon Cohen, a professor of psychology at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, and Robert Atmar, a professor of medicine in the Section of Infectious Diseases at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, explain how your family's home ownership during early childhood may come into play and why loners may fare worse. (Mitchell, 3/24)

The Washington Post: Why It's Good To Talk 'Baby Talk' To Your Child

All around the world, parents talk differently to babies than they do to adults. With their young kids, parents switch into a mode of communication known to linguists as "motherese" or infant-directed speech, and known more commonly as baby talk, a form of speech featuring long pauses and a roller coaster of pitch changes. For example, picture the upward swing in pitch that our voices take toward the end of a question ("Do you want to go to the park today?"): It's much more dramatic when we address young children than adults. (Piazza, 3/25)

NPR: Apps Selling Prescription Birth Control Do Well In 'Contraception Deserts'

Rachel Ralph works long hours at an accounting firm in Oakland, Calif., and coordinates much of her life via the apps on her phone. So when she first heard several months ago that she could order her usual brand of birth control pills via an app, and have them delivered to her doorstep in a day or two, it seemed perfect. She was working 12-hour days. "Food was delivered, dinner was often delivered," Ralph says. "Anything I could get sent to my house with little effort — the better." (McClurg and Lopez, 3/26)

The Washington Post: Wellness Is Made Easier With Some Simple Tips

What's wellness? Sure, it involves your physical form and your ability to deal with disease and other challenges. But wellness also has a lot to do with how you approach the world. Your relationships, your physical surroundings and your habits all affect your body and mind. (Blakemore, 3/25)

Columbus Dispatch: As Youth Suicides Rise, How Can You Help Your Kids?

Although state data on the deaths of Ohioans in 2017 is still incomplete, the department has recorded 111 suicides of young Ohioans during the year. That's the most in any year since at least 2007, the earliest for which data is available in the department's online data warehouse. (Viviano, 3/25)

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: Worker Death, Serious Injury Would Be A Felony Under Baldwin Bill

U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin and five other lawmakers introduced a bill Thursday to beef up punishment for companies and their leaders that knowingly commit violations resulting in worker deaths or severe injuries. Citing dangerous conditions at a chain of

barrel reconditioning plants, Baldwin said the bill would give the U.S. Occupational Health and Safety Administration stronger tools to go after offenders and extend its jurisdiction to government workers and others currently not covered by OSHA. (Diedrich, 3/23)

## PHARMACEUTICALS

### **12. 'Right To Try' Bill Focuses On Sidestepping FDA, But In Reality It's Drugmakers That Are Usually Ones Saying 'No'**

The bill passed by the House last week “does somewhere between nothing and absolutely nothing to help you,” said Dr. Arthur L. Caplan, a bioethicist at New York University. Patients are actually getting blocked by the drug companies themselves. Meanwhile, California's drug transparency law has kicked in, but it's still unclear if it will be met with success in controlling costs.

The New York Times: Why Can't Dying Patients Get The Drugs They Want?  
At first glance, a bill passed by the House of Representatives this week seems like the kind of thing anyone could get behind. Known as the “Right to Try” legislation, it would allow terminally ill patients access to experimental drugs without the approval of the Food and Drug Administration. But the bill and a similar one passed last summer by the Senate do little to address the main barrier that patients face in getting unapproved treatments: permission from the drug companies themselves. (Thomas, 3/23)

Politico: California's Drug Transparency Law Yields Early Surprises  
California's first-in-the-nation drug pricing transparency law is beginning to kick in — and to spur copycats, with Oregon's governor last week signing a law that requires drug companies to disclose cost components they have long considered proprietary. Whether they'll actually reduce prices is a crapshoot. (Colliver, 3/25)

In other pharmaceutical news —

The Associated Press: Benefits Of Lobbying Evident For Small Drugmaker  
Tucked in the massive congressional budget bill is a provision that props up the price Medicare pays for a handful of medications, costing taxpayers millions at a time when the Trump administration is vowing to reduce the cost of prescription drugs. Lawmakers acted after a lobbying campaign by a small Washington state pharmaceutical company called Omeros. Its main product is a drug called Omidria, used by hospitals in cataract surgery, which had recently lost a coveted Medicare reimbursement status. Individuals associated with the company also stepped up their political contributions. (3/24)

#### NPR: Patients' Comment About Drug Side Effects On Social Networks

When Allison Ruddick was diagnosed with stage 3 colorectal cancer in October 2014, she turned to the world of hashtags. After her initial diagnosis it wasn't clear if the cancer had metastasized, so she was in for a nerve-racking wait, she says. She wanted outside advice. "But they don't really give you a handbook, so you search kind of anywhere for answers," Ruddick says. "Social media was one of the first places I went." (Wilhelm, 3/23)

#### Stat: Cancer Immunotherapy Implants Get Boost By Novartis Licensing

Cancer immunotherapy — the process of activating a patient's own immune system to fight a tumor — is a booming field in drug development. But it faces certain hurdles. Fewer than a quarter of cancer patients benefit from leading drugs in the class known as "checkpoint inhibitors." And personalized cellular therapies are costly and complicated to create and deliver. To help solve those challenges, scientists at Harvard have developed an implantable device that would pull immune cells into the implant, train them to recognize pieces of the patient's tumor, and then release these cells — with the end goal of creating a sustained attack against the cancer. (Cooney, 3/26)

#### Orlando Sentinel: Mount Dora Boy Among First To Receive Approved Gene Therapy Drug For Eye Disease

Creed [Pettit], who lives in Mount Dora, has a rare inherited genetic disease that affects the retina — a thin layer in the back of the eye — and causes progressive vision loss and can lead to blindness. ... The surgery that was about to take place was a first for the team, and their patient was among the first in the U.S. to get a gene therapy drug approved by the Food and Drug Administration for an inherited genetic disease. (Miller, 3/23)

#### Quality

### **13. From Nightmarish Scenarios To Inspirational Moments: Experts Share Stories About Quality Of Care In U.S. System**

The experts talk with Modern Healthcare about the quality and safety of patient care in the country. "Are we better? Yeah, no question," said Dr. Brent James, former chief quality officer at Intermountain Healthcare. "Are we as good as we can be? Not nearly."

#### Modern Healthcare: No One Is Free From Harm: Quality And Safety Stories From Healthcare Industry Experts

Many people have harrowing stories to tell about their encounters with the U.S. healthcare system, involving issues of quality, safety or cost. That's particularly true for

physicians and other healthcare insiders, who can spot problems that a layman might miss. "Every health policy person, especially doctors, has a story or multiple stories to tell," says Dr. Robert Berenson, a fellow at the Urban Institute and former member of the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission. (Meyer, 3/24)

## MEDICAID

### **14. Debate Over Medicaid Rule Changes May Torpedo Mississippi's Budget Talks**

State House members have been seeking another opportunity for the state's hospitals to bid on part of the Medicaid program's managed care business, but the Senate is resisting that demand. Outlets report on Medicaid news out of Colorado, Texas and Maine, as well.

The Associated Press: Mississippi House Threatens Medicaid Budget In Rules Dispute  
Mississippi House members on Sunday threatened to torpedo next year's \$6 billion budget for the state-federal Medicaid health insurance program, unless senators agree to rule changes. Representatives sent the 2019 budget back for more talks with the Senate, demanding that the Senate agree on a rules bill before the House approves the budget. Among other things, House members have been seeking another opportunity for the state's hospitals to bid on part of the Medicaid program's managed care business. The Senate is resisting that demand after the Medicaid agency rejected a bid from a hospital group last summer. (Amy, 3/25)

The Clarion-Ledger: Lawmakers Set Stage For Possible Special Session To Fund Medicaid

The House sent a funding bill for Medicaid back to a House-Senate committee Sunday, leading to the prospect of a special session to deal with a Medicaid funding unless an agreement is reached by Monday's deadline. On Sunday, lawmakers in the House and Senate presented funding bills negotiated in conference as they worked on final details of an approximately \$6.1 billion state budget for the upcoming fiscal year. When it came to funding the Division of Medicaid, one of the state's largest agencies, concerns were raised on the House floor about the \$917.5 million bill not including the companion Medicaid technical amendment legislation. (Harris, Gates and Wolfe, 3/25)

Public News Service: Colorado Senate Pushes Work Requirements For Medicaid Coverage

Colorado's Senate, following the lead of the Trump administration, is considering adding work requirements for people with Medicaid coverage. Critics warn the move could end up taking health insurance away from more than six million Americans –

including hundreds of thousands of Coloradans if Senate Bill 214 becomes law. Allison Neswood, health care attorney with the Colorado Center on Law and Policy, says taking health coverage away from people who are unemployed won't help anyone find or hold onto a job, and would increase poverty in the state. (3/26)

Austin American-Statesman: Sendero Closing Out CHIP, Medicaid Health Care Plans  
Nonprofit health maintenance organization Sendero Health Plans is withdrawing from Texas' STAR Medicaid program and Children's Health Insurance Program markets effective May 1, citing projected losses in excess of \$800,000 per month, officials announced Friday. Officials with Travis County's health care district Central Health, which created Sendero with taxpayer money in 2012 to increase health care access, said Friday that they were closing their plans under those programs because they are not financially sustainable. (Goldenstein, 3/23)

Politico Pro: Maine Governor Resists Ballot Measure Expanding Medicaid  
Back in November, Maine voters ordered Gov. Paul LePage to expand the state's Medicaid program through a first-of-its-kind ballot initiative. But months later, the brash tea party Republican still hasn't done it, underscoring the potential pitfalls of the ballot strategy health care advocates are pushing in red states this year. (Pradhan, 3/22)

## STATE WATCH

### **15. State Highlights: Bill Allowing Family Members To Visit Ill Relatives Makes Strides In States; New N.J. Medical School Aims To Reverse Talent Drain**

Media outlets report on news from New Jersey, Virginia, Maryland, D.C., Texas, California, Florida, Colorado, Ohio, Nebraska, Arizona, Wyoming and Missouri.

Stateline: Family Members Fight For Right To Visit Ailing Relatives  
Experiences like [Toby] Davidow's have prompted at least 11 states to enact laws that would provide a legal remedy, besides seeking guardianship, which can be costly and complicated, for relatives who have been prevented from seeing infirm or disabled family members. Under the laws, relatives can seek a court order permitting visitation and communication. The order must be granted, unless the ailing relative is found to be mentally competent and objects to contact. (Ollove, 3/26)

The Wall Street Journal: New Jersey Venture Aims To Stop 'Exodus' Of Medical Students  
Years in the making, Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine at Seton Hall University

is finally ready for students. The school, located at the former Hoffmann-La Roche campus in Nutley, N.J., is a joint venture of Seton Hall University and Hackensack Meridian Health. The college began accepting applications this week for its first class of 55 students, who will begin studies this July. (West, 3/24)

The Hill: Texas Wants Back Family Planning Funds It Lost Under Obama For Defunding Planned Parenthood

Texas is asking for federal family planning funding to be returned to the state five years after it was pulled by the Obama administration for defunding Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers. In a letter to Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton asked HHS to reverse the Obama administration's exclusion of Texas from the Title X family planning grant program, which helps fund reproductive health care services for low-income women. (Hellmann, 3/23)

Sacramento Bee: CA Assembly Pitches Alternative To Single-Payer Health Care  
California Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon is refusing to advance this year a controversial single-payer health care bill that would dramatically reshape the state's health care financing and delivery system. Instead, he's orchestrating an alternative, narrower approach that seeks to achieve universal coverage and make Obamacare more affordable. (Hart and Luna, 3/26)

Modern Healthcare: Experts Praise Centralizing Health System Control

When it comes to health system governing boards, for the most part, experts agree: Less is more. It's an important message for the hospital industry, which has been slow to shed its bureaucratic layers. Industry gurus praised St. Joseph Health's recent move to strip key decision making authority from four California hospital boards and shift that control to a regional board, saying it aligns with a governance style that keeps health systems nimble and efficient, even as they add new hospitals. (Bannow, 3/24)

Tampa Bay Times: Should Florida Law Require School Kids To Get The HPV Vaccine?  
A bill called the "Women's Cancer Prevention Act" would have required children entering Florida public schools to receive the vaccine that protects against cervical and other cancers caused by human papillomavirus (HPV) infections. While it didn't get much traction in the Capitol this time around, the bill is likely to pop up again next year as other states begin to pass and consider similar legislation. (Griffin, 3/26)

Denver Post: Uber Is Taking A Larger Role In Transporting People To Colorado Hospitals. Does That Promote Inequality?

But people who can't afford the ride, who don't use a smartphone or who require specially equipped vehicles are often left out — even though they form the group most



in need of transportation help. Advocates for those with disabilities argue that the disparity violates the law. Uber has been sued at least twice nationwide over accessibility. ...There are other medical transportation services in Colorado — the Regional Transportation District offers one, and there are others available to people who qualify for Medicaid — but those services need to be scheduled well in advance and aren't as conveniently on-demand. In lieu of better options, patients sometimes call for expensive ambulance rides, even if it's not an emergency. (Ingold, 3/23)

#### Cleveland Plain Dealer: Cleveland Officials To Place Signs On Homes With Lead Hazards Starting April 2

Cleveland officials will begin posting warning signs on homes with lingering lead hazards and where children have been poisoned. The signs, known as home placards, are mandated by Ohio law and will begin April 2. (Madden, 3/26)

#### WBUR: More States Move To End 'Tampon Tax' That's Seen As Discriminating Against Women

So far, nine states have exempted menstrual products from their sales tax, and seven have introduced legislation aimed at doing the same. Three of the seven — Nebraska, Virginia and Arizona — introduced their legislation this year. (Sagner, 3/25)

#### Wyoming Public Radio: Special Education Funding Cap Sets Hard Deadline For Innovations

In an effort to curb the rising costs of K-12 education, the state legislature voted to cap spending on special education during the 2018 Budget Session. Lawmakers also directed the Wyoming Department of Education to come up with efficiencies. While educators agree there's room for improvements, they say Wyoming's rural nature complicates things. (Watson, 3/23)

#### St. Louis Public Radio: Inside the Workhouse: Conditions, Treatment And Time Served Remain Under Scrutiny

St. Louis public safety officials want city residents to know people jailed at the St. Louis Medium Security Institution are treated humanely despite allegations to the contrary. In March, the mayor's spokesman invited reporters to tour the jail — commonly known as the Workhouse — after weeks of requests for access from local press. (Lisenby, 3/26)

#### Chicago Sun Times: Synthetic Pot Linked To Several Cases Of Severe Bleeding In NE Illinois

State public health officials have linked synthetic marijuana to four cases of severe bleeding that have been reported this month in northeast Illinois. The first case was reported to the Illinois Poison Center on March 10, according to a statement released Friday by the Illinois Department of Public Health. In total, the "unusual cluster of

cases" has left four people hospitalized. Each person has suffered severe bleeding from a condition that reduces the blood's ability to clot. (Schuba, 3/24)

## EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

### **16. Different Takes: March Showed Time Is Up For Gun Lobby; Gonzalez's Silence During Speech Was Thundering**

Opinion writers expressed views on the public health crisis caused by gun violence.

**Bloomberg: NRA Created The March For Our Lives That Now Threatens It**  
You had to be there. As Americans took to the streets Saturday, defying a political order that, in Washington and many state capitals, has allowed extremists to write gun laws, the bodies -- of both the dead and the living who marched in their honor -- mattered a lot. Hundreds of thousands in cities big and small showed up. It was an extraordinary coming-out party for a movement that is now, at long last, undeniably mass. ...The confluence of those forces -- opposing sexism, racism, corruption -- into the March for Our Lives is only the latest confirmation of how spectacularly the National Rifle Association has gone awry. As one handwritten poster in Los Angeles, drawing on the slogan against sexist exploitation in Hollywood, stated: "Hey NRA Time's Up."  
(Francis Wilkinson, 3/24)

**Miami Herald: Anti-Gun Marches Were A Triumph Of Passion And Commitment, However Advocates Need To Take The Long View**  
They made the case in Washington, D.C, in Miami, in New York, in Buenos Aires and in scores of other cities. At the March for Our Lives, Saturday, they spoke as one: "Enough is enough." ...And, of course, Emma Gonzalez, the dominant face and voice of what fellow students are calling "the revolution" demonstrated the enormous eloquence of not speaking at all. Her six minutes and 20 seconds of silence were riveting. (3/25)

**Bloomberg: The March For Our Lives Is A Worthy Cause**  
The U.S. loses more than 30,000 people to gun violence each year not because Americans are uniquely bad people, but because America has uniquely flawed laws. Other nations -- America's peers around the world -- have laws that elevate human beings over guns. Today, in towns and cities across the U.S., Americans will march with the goal of bringing their own laws, which render life cheap and tragedy abundant, better in line with their values. (3/24)

**The Washington Post: The March Of The Hope-Mongers**  
For several hours on Saturday, cynicism was banned from the streets of what on many

days seems to be the most cynical city in the world. Throngs estimated to number up to 800,000 gathered because a group of determined, organized, eloquent and extremely shrewd high school students asked them to come, and because too many Americans have been killed by guns. Suddenly, hope-mongers were stalking the nation's capital. They believed, against so much past evidence, that the National Rifle Association could be routed. (E.J. Dionne Jr. , 3/25)

Detroit Free Press: What If TV News Showed The Truth About What Guns Do? Perhaps, after the next massacre — following the “thoughts and prayers,” of course — some television network should have the guts to show the reality that (Rick) Sanchez described. Show the blood, brains, guts and gore. Let honest video tell the truth about our routine human slaughters. Just the facts, ma’am. (Joe Lapointe, 3/25)

Bloomberg: March For Our Lives Shows The Power Of Youth Activism On Saturday, students from the Florida high school that was the scene of a mass shooting in February inspired more than 800 “March for Our Lives” rallies demanding better gun laws. The marches came on the heels of national school walkouts organized by students on March 14. Of course, Americans have been talking about the need for gun reform for a very, very long time. But the way young people have now taken the lead, demanding that the shooting result in change and creating a playbook for other kids to copy, is likely to finally force lawmakers to take action. (Kara Alaimo, 3/26)

Arizona Republic: Ban Assault Weapons? That Won't Stop School Violence, But This Will

Gunmen who shoot up “gun-free zones” have radically different backgrounds and motivations from those who engage in other forms of gun violence. A full-spectrum approach is required, addressing not only guns, but several other factors. (Jon Gabriel, 3/24)

The Arizona Republic: March For Our Lives Generation Will Make Gun Control A Reality

At its core, the nationwide March for Our Lives campaign is an anti-war movement. It's trying to put an end to a war we've been waging — and continue to wage — against ourselves. Whenever there are large public demonstrations, such as this weekend's student-led March for Our Lives protests, we ask ourselves whether they represent the beginning of something big, or the end. Are the protests simply a noisy expression of our exasperation over gun violence in the wake of the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., and all the others, or are they the first step in what could be a long, bipartisan legislative process over gun laws? (EJ Montini, 3/25)

## **17. Viewpoints: Yes, An Abortion Ban Proposal In Ohio Is Unconstitutional. But ...; GOP Attack On Medicaid Is Backfiring**

Editorial pages focus on these health topics and others.

The New York Times: An Ohio Bill Would Ban All Abortions. It's Part Of A Bigger Plan. While Donald Trump once said he was "very pro-choice," since the start of his presidential campaign his stance on abortion has been consistent: It should be banned, no matter the consequences to women. At times, he has even veered to the right of the mainstream anti-abortion movement, as when he said during a primary season town hall event that women who seek abortions should face "some form of punishment." Most anti-abortion politicians profess to want to protect women, even when they pass laws that harm them. Now legislators in one state want Mr. Trump's cruel vision to become reality. Ohio lawmakers have proposed legislation to ban all abortions, period, with no exceptions for victims of rape or incest or to save a woman's life. (3/25)

USA Today: As Voters Lead On Medicaid, Health Care Could Be The Next Gay Marriage

Since the day Donald Trump took office, he and Republicans in Congress have had government health care programs like Medicaid in their sights. And reactions across the country, highlighted by recent special elections in Pennsylvania and Alabama, suggest this is backfiring in a spectacular way. Their policies are so out of line with public thinking that the more they push them, the higher the likelihood that they put the country on an inevitable path to Medicaid, Medicare or some other health care plan that is ubiquitous and available to all. (Andy Slavitt and Jonathan Schleifer, 3/26)

The New York Times: Why It's So Hard To Reform Canadian Health Care  
Too many Canadians and Americans are negatively fixated on each other's health systems — and the distortions that accompany so many conversations about health reform make it harder to improve care on both sides of the border. Canadians staunchly support our universal health care system, according to polls over many years. We live longer, healthier lives than Americans, and our survival rates for cancer and other diseases are comparable. The father of universal health coverage in Canada, Tommy Douglas, is considered a national hero. (Danielle Martin, 3/23)

The Hill: Small Businesses Hurt From Trump's Health-Care Sabotage

Though the ACA has been far from perfect for small business owners since it was signed eight years ago, it did offer stable, single-digit increases in premiums from year to year. But for more than a year, President Trump and his Republican allies have been actively sabotaging our health-care system. After repeatedly failing to repeal and

replace the ACA in the face of overwhelming public opposition, they've instead resorted to dismantling our health care piece by piece. (Amanda Ballantyne, 3/25)

Richmond Times-Dispatch: It's Time To Close The Health Care Gap In Virginia  
Virginia lawmakers have an opportunity to adopt a health-care coverage plan with conservative reforms that help people and give them a stake in their own success. It's a deal they should make. (Bill Bolling, 3/24)

The New York Times: What We Know (And Don't Know) About How To Lose Weight  
The endless array of diets that claim to help you shed pounds tend to fall into two camps: low fat or low carbohydrate. Some companies even claim that genetics can tell us which diet is better for which people. A rigorous recent study sought to settle the debate, and it had results to disappoint both camps. On the hopeful side, as The New York Times noted, people managed to lose weight no matter which of the two diets they followed. The study is worth a closer look to see what it did and did not prove. (Aaron E. Carroll, 3/26)

The Wall Street Journal: What's A Single Mom To Do During A Week In The Hospital?  
Eleven days after the birth of her daughter last September, Charlotte—who asked me not to use her last name—began to have complications from pre-eclampsia, a serious pregnancy-related disorder that causes high blood pressure. She had to be readmitted to the hospital for almost a week. But as a recent immigrant from Senegal with no family or friends living nearby, she did not know what to do with her new baby. If no one was available, she feared child protective services would take the girl into custody. (Naomi Schaefer Riley, 3/23)

Cincinnati Enquirer: Don't Make Women Choose Between A Job Or Pregnancy  
To be sure, not every pregnant woman will be able to work up until her due date, but if we do not at least have laws on the books encouraging pregnant women to safely stay in the labor force, then we are inviting injuries on the job, serious health risks to both mother and baby, and increased state spending on things like public benefits. For these reasons, I urge our legislators to vote on and pass the Kentucky Pregnant Workers' Rights Act, so that no other woman in Kentucky has to go through what I did. (Lyndi Trischler, 3/23)

Georgia Health News: Legislators Have Chance To Rein In Excesses Of Step Therapy  
Georgia has an opportunity this legislative session to cut through the secretive red tape surrounding insurance practices and ensure that the sickest and most vulnerable among us have the care they need. House Bill 519, which unanimously passed the state House this session and is also pending as Senate Bill 325, would limit step therapy – also known as “fail first” – protocols, whereby patients are forced by their

insurance providers to try and fail on a series of treatments before they can obtain the medication prescribed by their physician. (Dorothy Leone-Glasser, 3/25)

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Louisville Courier-Journal: Kentucky Should Help Imprisoned Mothers, Pregnant Inmates Through The 'Dignity Bill'

In the midst of a tumultuous, partisan and often disappointing legislative session here in Kentucky, one bill has persevered that could offer some hope to our most vulnerable, and often forgotten citizens: incarcerated mothers and their babies. Kentucky is facing an epidemic of incarcerated women, many of whom are pregnant, struggling with addiction, or suffering from a trauma that led them down the wrong path. I filed Senate Bill 133, now dubbed the "Dignity Bill," to specifically address these important issues. (Julie Raque Adams, 3/23)

Sacramento Bee: California Values All People — Until They Need Housing

Assemblymember Rob Bonta, D-Oakland, has introduced legislation, Assembly Bill 2925, that would begin to address this by requiring landlords to show "just cause" before terminating anyone's lease. His team is still working on the language, but it would create a set of valid reasons, such as failing to pay rent, that would have to be used as justification. It's a modest bill that, if nothing else, would add a layer of transparency to what is often a murky rental process, with tenants not understanding their rights. (Erika Smith, 3/25)

The Hill: Congress Must Lead On Cannabis Reform And Stand With The American Public

I was dismayed to see Attorney General Jeff Sessions (AG) recently rescind the Cole Memo, a United States Department of Justice (DOJ) document providing guidelines to United States attorneys in states that have chosen to legalize cannabis. This memo provided protection to states whose voters and duly elected legislatures have legalized some form of marijuana use. While I may not be in favor unfettered adult use for individuals over 21 years of age, I am a strong supporter of medical marijuana. Numerous friends and acquaintances benefit from the medicinal properties and pain relief provided by cannabis. I favor state-based access to medical marijuana from both a philosophical and policy standpoint. I also support the reform of our federal cannabis laws to bring conformity to federal regulations and state laws. (Michael Steele, 3/23)

The Wall Street Journal: Marijuana Supply-Siders

California's experiment in marijuana legalization is spurring some radical thinking on the political left. Lo, high taxes and over-regulation are bad for the economy—or at least the pot economy. Golden State voters in 2016 legalized recreational marijuana on

the promise that this would reduce the black market. While marijuana remains a banned substance under federal law, nine states including Washington, Nevada, Oregon and Colorado have legalized consumption and production within their borders. Many are still struggling to draw cannabis businesses out of the shadows, none as much as California. Less than 1% of the state's 68,150 marijuana cultivators had obtained licenses as of last month, according to a recent report by the California Growers Association. The problem turns out to be the heavy hand of the state. "The incredible volume of regulation is part of the issue," the report notes, adding that "consultants and attorneys are often a major cost for small businesses." (3/23)

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Arizona Republic: Arizona Pension Fund Could Cost You A Lot More Without This Fix  
From the beginning, the Public Safety Personnel Retirement System has been doing exactly that concerning a serious problem that is not getting the attention it deserves — the financial crash facing Arizona's Elected Officials Retirement Plan, also known as EORP. As chairman of the PSPRS Board of Trustees, let me again be clear in addressing this looming crisis: Unless the Legislature takes action, EORP will go broke within nine years. (Brian Tobin, 3/23)

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# Kaiser Family Foundation's The Latest

April 4, 2018

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## PERSPECTIVE

### The Politics of ACA Rate Hikes Will Be 2016 in Reverse

Democrats are expected to turn the tables and attack Republicans for rising premiums and sabotaging the Affordable Care Act. In his latest Axios column, Drew Altman discusses a balancing act they face which has not received attention: score political points, but run the risk of a new debate scaring the broader public and undermining the ACA by focusing on its continuing problems. ([Axios Column](#))

## MEDICARE

### Medicare Advantage Plans Cleared To Go Beyond Medical Coverage – Even Groceries

On Monday, CMS expanded how it defines the “primarily health-related” benefits that insurers are allowed to include in their Medicare Advantage policies. Air conditioners for people with asthma, healthy groceries, rides to medical appointments and home-delivered meals may be among the new



benefits added to Medicare Advantage coverage when new federal rules take effect next year. ([KHN](#))

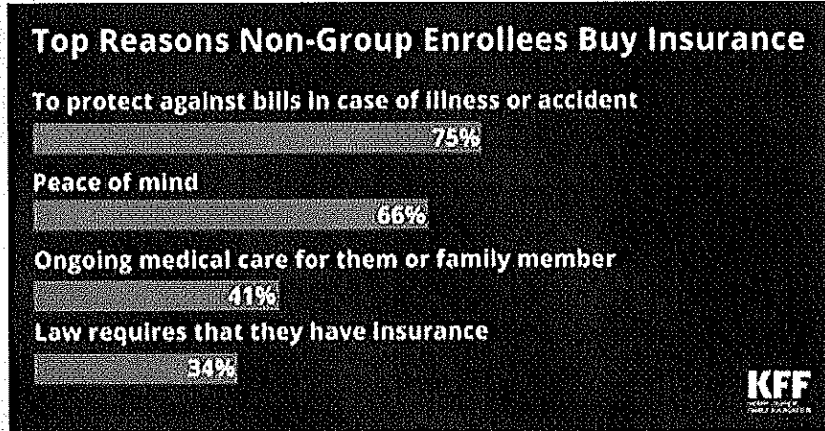
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## POLLING

### Survey of Non-Group Enrollees

A survey of people who purchase their own insurance finds that nine out of 10 people with non-group health insurance plan to continue buying insurance despite the repeal of the individual mandate penalty. One-fifth were aware that the mandate had been repealed but was still in effect for 2018.

([News Release](#), [Poll Finding](#))



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## News and Headlines

News and headlines from Kaiser Health News (KHN) and California Healthline (CHL). Follow KHN on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, and CHL on Facebook and Twitter, for the latest updates.

- Medicare Advantage Plans Cleared To Go Beyond Medical Coverage – Even Groceries ([KHN](#))
- Medicaid Minus Stigma: In Indian Country, It's Part Of The Fabric Of Life ([KHN](#), [CNN Money](#))
- Atlanta Struggles To Meet MLK's Legacy On Health Care ([KHN](#), [NPR](#))
- 'Nightmare Bacteria' Stalk U.S. Hospitals ([KHN](#), [USA Today](#))
- Americans Have Mixed Feelings About The ACA's Future – But Like Their Plans ([KHN](#))
- Don't Get Tripped Up By The IRS' Tweak To Health Savings Accounts ([KHN](#))
- Older Americans Are Hooked On Vitamins Despite Scarce Evidence They Work ([KHN](#), [New York Times](#))
- Psychiatrist Stays Close To Home And True To Her Childhood Promise ([KHN](#))
- Latest news summaries from the [KHN Morning Briefing](#)

## Data and Analysis

The latest in health policy data and analysis from the Kaiser Family Foundation.

- The politics of ACA rate hikes will be 2016 in reverse ([Axios Column](#))
- Survey of Non-Group Enrollees ([News Release](#), [Poll Findings](#))
- Nursing Facilities, Staffing, Residents and Facility Deficiencies, 2009 Through 2016 ([Report](#))
- New State Data:
  - Cancer Death and Incidence Rates ([State Data](#))
  - Breast and Cervical Cancer Death and Incidence Rates ([State Data](#))
  - Cervical Cancer Incidence Rate Per 100,000 Women, by Race/Ethnicity, 2014 ([State Data](#))
  - Breast Cancer Incidence Rate Per 100,000 Women, by Race/Ethnicity, 2014 ([State Data](#))
  - Health Professional Shortage Areas ([State Data](#))
  - Abortion Statistics ([State Data](#))
- Latest news summaries from the [Kaiser Daily Global Health Policy Report](#)

## The Buzz

See what's driving health policy conversation on social media. Follow Kaiser Family Foundation on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn for the latest updates and perspectives.



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The average premium subsidy paid by the federal government in the federal ACA marketplace increased from \$383 per month in 2017 to a whopping \$550 in 2018. The big loser here is the federal treasury.

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## S.R. 772 Reopened At Rarden

Chillicothe (Thursday, April 5, 2018) -- S.R. 772 in Scioto County has been reopened following an emergency slip repair.

The route was closed Wednesday, April 4, between S.R. 73 at the village of Rarden and T.R. 77 (Kirker Road) following a pavement slip. Crews from ODOT's Scioto County Maintenance Facility made the temporary repairs today, April 5, in order to restore the route to traffic.

A landslide remediation project will get under way this summer as part of the District 9 construction program, whereby contractors will install a drilled shaft retaining wall and repair the pavement. A contract is scheduled to be awarded in mid-June, with construction anticipated to begin soon thereafter.

**For more information contact:**

Kathleen Fuller, public information officer

Ohio Department of Transportation - District 9

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## First Edition

Monday, April 16, 2018

Visit Kaiser Health News for the latest headlines

Today's early morning highlights from the major news organizations.

### **Kaiser Health News: 'Scary' Lung Disease Now Afflicts More Women Than Men In U.S.**

Joan Cousins was among a generation of young women who heard — and bought into the idea — that puffing on a cigarette was sophisticated, modern, even liberating. No one suspected it would make them more than equal to men in suffering a choking, life-shortening lung disease. “Everybody smoked. It was the cool thing to do,” said Cousins, who smoked her first cigarette 67 years ago at age 16. (Gorman, 4/16)

### **The Washington Post: Republicans Lose Their Favorite Campaign Message: Repealing Obamacare**

The campaign website of Rep. Mike Bishop (R-Mich.) doesn't mention Obamacare, even though Web archives show it once prominently featured promises to vigorously fight the 2010 health-care law. Rep. Garland “Andy” Barr (R-Ky.) touted repealing the Affordable Care Act as one of three top priorities when first running for Congress in 2012. Now his website focuses on tax cuts and job creation instead. In her first House bid in 2014, Rep. Barbara Comstock (R-Va.) said her campaign was about growing the economy, creating jobs and “repealing and replacing Obamacare.” She's not talking about that anymore. (Cunningham, 4/14)

### **Modern Healthcare: 50 Shades Of Healthcare: Bit By Bit, The Affordable Care Act Is Being Remade**

As the Trump administration and some in Congress whittle away at the Affordable Care Act, blue states are filling in gaps in an attempt to bolster their markets. Others are picking up chainsaws. Federal moves to pull a form of financial assistance for low-income Americans and slash ACA outreach and advertising last year were followed by the GOP tax law's elimination of the individual mandate penalty, and a proposal to expand health coverage that disregards ACA rules and protections. A bipartisan bill to restore cost-sharing reduction payments and establish a federal reinsurance fund fizzled out. (Livingston, 4/14)

### **The New York Times: How Profiteers Lure Women Into Often-Unneeded Surgery**

Jerri Plummer was at home in Arkansas, watching television with her three children, when a stranger called to warn that her life was in danger. The caller identified herself only as Yolanda. She told Ms. Plummer that the vaginal mesh implant supporting her bladder was defective and needed to be removed. If Ms. Plummer didn't act quickly, the caller urged, she might die. (Goldstein and Silver-Greenberg, 4/14)

### **The New York Times: Drug Company 'Shenanigans' To Block Generics Come Under Federal Scrutiny**

Trump administration officials, seeking ways to lower drug costs, are targeting pharmaceutical companies that refuse to provide samples of their products to generic drug companies, making it impossible to create inexpensive generic copies of a brand-name medicine. Dr. Scott Gottlieb, the commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, said recently that drug makers must "end the shenanigans" that prevent competing products from reaching the market. (Pear, 4/14)

### **Stat: Maryland Law That Punished Generic Price Gouging Is Ruled Unconstitutional**

In a victory for the pharmaceutical industry, a federal appeals court panel ruled that a Maryland state law that was enacted to punish generic drug makers for price gouging is unconstitutional. In explaining its decision, the panel sided with a trade group for generic drug makers that argued the state law violates interstate commerce by giving Maryland officials the right to govern business outside the state, effectively providing "unprecedented powers to regulate the national pharmaceutical market." (Silverman, 4/13)

### **Stat: Former Mallinckrodt Employee Alleges The Ingredients In A Best-Selling Drug Are A Mystery**

In a sensational lawsuit, a former Mallinckrodt (MNK) employee claims that she was fired for repeatedly warning the drug maker about a host of allegedly illegal activities



designed to boost sales of a key drug. Those practices included running a "sham" patient assistance program and refusing to provide payers with clinical data that would be used for making coverage decisions. Moreover, executives were allegedly unaware of the ingredients in the best-selling Achter drug, which is used to treat infantile spasms and often prescribed for more than a dozen other maladies. (Silverman, 4/13)

**Reuters: EpiPen Shortages Seen In Canada, UK But U.S. Supply Intact**

Mylan N.V.'s emergency allergy antidote EpiPen is in short supply in Canada and Britain, but remains available in the United States, the treatment's manufacturer said on Friday. EpiPens deliver potentially lifesaving doses of the generic drug epinephrine, via an automatic injector that a patient or caregiver can administer in the event of severe allergic reaction. "We are shipping product. Currently there is no shortage in the U.S.," said Steve Danehy, a spokesman for Pfizer Inc, which produces the global supply of EpiPens for Mylan out of a single facility near St. Louis, Missouri. (Berkrot and Erman, 4/14)

**Politico: Abortion Foes Seize On Chance To Overturn Roe**

The anti-abortion movement believes it's one Donald Trump-appointed Supreme Court justice away from a shot at overturning Roe v. Wade, and advocates are teeing up what they hope will be the winning challenge. From Iowa to South Carolina, lawmakers are proposing some of the most far-reaching abortion restrictions in a generation, hoping their legislation triggers the lawsuit that eventually makes it to the high court. (Haberborn, 4/15)

**The Associated Press: House Panel OKs Bill With Medicaid Work Requirement Change**

A committee of Virginia lawmakers has advanced a budget plan expanding Medicaid but tightening part of a work requirement plan House lawmakers approved earlier this year. The House Appropriations Committee approved two bills on bipartisan votes Friday, sending them to the full chamber. Lawmakers are taking another stab at passing a budget after attempts during the regular session ended in a stalemate over disagreement about Medicaid expansion. A final deal could be weeks away. (4/13)

**The Washington Post: Va. House Committee Tries Again For Medicaid Expansion, With Tougher Work Rules**

On Friday, the committee passed essentially the same House budget that died in March — but with a handful of amendments meant to make expansion more palatable to the Senate. Two Republicans in that chamber have said they would team up with Democrats on Medicaid under certain conditions. After the meeting, House Appropriations Committee Chairman S. Chris Jones (R-Suffolk) declined to say

whether he thought the plan would satisfy the two senators, Emmett W. Hanger (Augusta) and Frank W. Wagner (Virginia Beach). (Vozzella, 4/13)

**The Washington Post: Feds: Increase Medication-Based Treatment For Opioids**

Deep within President Donald Trump's plan to combat opioid abuse, overshadowed by his call for the death penalty for some drug traffickers, is a push to expand the use of medication to treat addiction. It's a rare instance in which Trump isn't trying roll back Obama administration policies, and where fractious Republicans and Democrats in Congress have come together. Trump declared last month that "we're making medically assisted treatment more available and affordable," even as Congress was working to approve \$1 billion for a new treatment grant program for opioids as part of the massive spending bill to keep the government running. (Alonso-Zaldivar, 4/16)

**The New York Times: A Drug To End Addiction? Scientists Are Working On It.**

Scrambling for ways to contain America's out-of-control opioid crisis, some experts in the field are convinced that one bit of good advice is to just say no to the enduring "just say no" antidrug message. Addiction, they say, is not a question of free will or a correctable character flaw, as a lot of people would like to believe. Rather, it is an affliction of the brain that needs to be treated as one would any chronic illness. One possible approach, an experimental vaccine, draws attention in this offering from Retro Report, a series of short video documentaries exploring major news stories of the past and their lasting impact. (Haberman, 4/15)

**The Wall Street Journal: FDA Bans Sale Of Caffeine In Bulk Directly To Consumers**

Online shopping has made it easy for consumers to affordably buy highly concentrated caffeine in bulk, whether to mix it into a workout shake or using it as an alternative to a morning coffee. However, a U.S. regulator said that small amounts of pure caffeine products have proven to be dangerous and even fatal. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has issued guidance banning the sale of pure or highly concentrated caffeine in powder or liquid forms as a dietary supplement in large quantities directly to consumers, calling it a significant public health threat. (Hufford, 4/13)

**The New York Times: Employees Jump At Genetic Testing. Is That A Good Thing?**

Levi Strauss & Company introduced a novel benefit for employees at its San Francisco headquarters last fall: free genetic screening to assess their hereditary risks for certain cancers and high cholesterol. Chip Bergh, Levi's chief executive, said he had hoped that the tests would spur employees to take preventive health steps and in that way reduce the company's health care costs. But even Mr. Bergh was surprised by the

turnout. Of the 1,100 eligible Levi's employees, more than half took the genetic tests. Now, he wants to extend the benefit to employees in other cities. (Singer, 4/15)

### **The Wall Street Journal: Why No One Wants To Back The Gun Of The Future**

It was supposed to be the dawn of a new era of "smart guns." Spurred by the deaths of 20 young children in the 2012 Sandy Hook elementary school shooting, Silicon Valley set out to make safer, technologically advanced weapons that could only be fired by their owners. Venture-capital luminary Ron Conway, known for his early investments in Google and PayPal, led the charge, raising millions for grants aimed at jump-starting the smart-gun industry. (Elinson and Palazzolo, 4/14)

### **The New York Times: 'We're Out Of Options': Doctors Battle Drug-Resistant Typhoid Outbreak**

The first known epidemic of extensively drug-resistant typhoid is spreading through Pakistan, infecting at least 850 people in 14 districts since 2016, according to the National Institute of Health Islamabad. The typhoid strain, resistant to five types of antibiotics, is expected to disseminate globally, replacing weaker strains where they are endemic. Experts have identified only one remaining oral antibiotic — azithromycin — to combat it; one more genetic mutation could make typhoid untreatable in some areas. (Baumgaertner, 4/13)

### **The New York Times: Trillions Upon Trillions Of Viruses Fall From The Sky Each Day**

High in the Sierra Nevada mountains of Spain, an international team of researchers set out four buckets to gather a shower of viruses falling from the sky. Scientists have surmised there is a stream of viruses circling the planet, above the planet's weather systems but below the level of airline travel. Very little is known about this realm, and that's why the number of deposited viruses stunned the team in Spain. Each day, they calculated, some 800 million viruses cascade onto every square meter of the planet. (Robbins, 4/13)

### **NPR: Doctors Keep Hypertension Patients Honest With A Drug Test**

There's an irony at the heart of the treatment of high blood pressure. The malady itself often has no symptoms, yet the medicines to treat it ~~to~~ and to prevent a stroke or heart attack later — can make people feel crummy. "It's not that you don't want to take it, because you know it's going to help you. But it's the getting used to it," says Sharon Fulson, a customer service representative from Nashville, Tenn., who is trying to monitor and control her hypertension. (Farmer, 4/16)

**Los Angeles Times: Too Much Sitting May Thin The Part Of Your Brain That's Important For Memory, Study Suggests**

If you want to take a good stroll down memory lane, new research suggests you'd better get out of that chair more often. In a first-of-its-kind study, researchers have found that in people middle-aged and older, a brain structure that is key to learning and memory is plumpest in those who spend the most time standing up and moving. At every age, prolonged sitters show less thickness in the medial temporal lobe and the subregions that make it up, the study found. (Healy, 4/13)

**The Wall Street Journal: The Benefits Of Bright Light For Hospital Patients**

Some hospitals and nursing homes are seeing the light—and rethinking the dim glow that illuminates most patients' rooms. Once an afterthought, lighting is getting attention as researchers see how it affects a person's mood, energy and sleep. A clinical trial at Mount Sinai Health System in New York City is testing whether brighter lights in cancer patients' rooms in the morning can make them feel less tired and depressed and help them sleep through the night. (Lagnado, 4/14)

**The Washington Post: Birth Control Ban Imagined In Art Exhibition**

Remember the early 2000s, when the United States passed laws banning condoms and the pill, and sex was officially designated for reproductive purposes only? Of course you don't = 2 it never happened. But a new art exhibition in New York imagines what life would be like if it had. "Museum of Banned Objects," D at the Ace Hotel New York Gallery through April 30 (continuing online after that), looks at the history of "The Ban" from the vantage point of a dystopian future. The law — sweeping legislation in which all reproductive-health products and contraceptives were made illegal — took birth control underground. (Blakemore, 4/14)

**The New York Times: You Share Everything With Your Bestie. Even Brain Waves.**

A friend will help you move, goes an old saying, while a good friend will help you move a body. And why not? Moral qualms aside, that good friend would likely agree the victim was an intolerable jerk who had it coming and, jeez, you shouldn't have done this but where do you keep the shovel? Researchers have long known that people choose friends who are much like themselves in a wide array of characteristics: of a similar age, race, religion, socioeconomic status, educational level, political leaning, pulchritude rating, even handgrip strength. The impulse toward homophily, toward bonding with others who are the least other possible, is found among traditional hunter-gatherer groups and advanced capitalist societies alike. (Angier, 4/16)

**The New York Times: Friendship's Dark Side: 'We Need A Common Enemy'**

As a rule, friendship is considered an unalloyed good, one of life's happy-happies, like flowers and fresh fruit. "Report: It Would Probably Be Nice Having Friends," D read a

recent headline in The Onion. Ha ha! Of course it's "kind of fun" and "pretty cool" to "have a few select people in your life to do stuff with on a regular basis." Most people can name at least half a dozen people they view as reasonably good friends. The only society where people don't have any friends, according to Daniel Hruschka, an evolutionary anthropologist at Arizona State University, is found in the science fiction of C.J. Cherryh's "Foreigner" series. (Angier, 4/16)

### **The Washington Post: Marriage Researchers Explain How Marriage And Intimate Relationships Affect Your Health**

Is hostility in your marriage stressing or depressing you? Does your partner have a chronic disorder? Then watch out. Although married people generally have better health than others, studies have found, partners in these two situations can face an increased risk of obesity and cardiovascular disease. Janice K. Kiecolt-Glaser, director of the Institute for Behavioral Medicine Research at Ohio State University, and Stephanie J. Wilson, a postdoctoral researcher in her lab, study — and explain here — the health effects of intimate relationships. (Rusting, 4/15)

### **The New York Times: Single? No Kids? Don't Fret: How To Plan Care In Your Later Years**

Sarah Peveler lacks a support system that many older people count on: their adult children. But Ms. Peveler, 71, who is divorced and childless, said she was determined not to let fear of an uncertain future get the best of her. To help avoid the potential perils of a solitary old age, Ms. Peveler is carrying out a multipronged, go-it-alone plan. A key part of it was to find a small community where she could make friends and walk nearly everywhere, without worrying about the hazards of ice and snow. (Garland, 4/23)

### **The Washington Post: Aging People Are Feeling Younger**

We've heard all the clichés about aging: "You're as young [or old] as you feel." "Age is just a number." "You're not getting older, you're getting better." "Seventy is the new 50." Well-intentioned, perhaps. Offensive, to some. Patronizing, to be sure. But could they be true? Maybe science has started to catch up with these tired phrases. Researchers have discovered that many people feel good about themselves as they get older. (Cimons, 4/14)

### **The Washington Post: Steps To Take To Live An Active And Happy Life When You're Old**

In good weather, Sylvia Lask logs thousands of steps a day on her Fitbit as she pushes down New York City sidewalks with her walker. As frequently as once a week, she heads to Albany, walker and all, to lobby state government officials about mental-health issues. Florence Lee drives in to Manhattan on her own from Queens on Thursday nights during the New York Philharmonic's season for performances of the vaunted

orchestra. Larry White still travels around New York State, as he has for the past 10 years, to help prison inmates manage long sentences. (Bruno, 4/14)

**The New York Times: The Clinical Trial Is Open. The Elderly Need Not Apply.**

Dr. Ken Covinsky, a geriatrician and researcher, was sitting in his office at the San Francisco VA Medical Center last month, browsing through a medical journal on his computer. When he came across a study of sodium excretion, he waded into the abstract. The research team, mostly based at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, had used 24-hour urine collections to estimate how much salt Americans take in each day. (Span, 4/13)

**The Washington Post: HIV-Infected People Live Longer But Are Get Age-Related Diseases Hit Them Younger**

David Hardy has been treating HIV-infected patients since the early 1980s, when the epidemic began. In those days, people newly diagnosed with AIDS lived for only about six months. Hardy, an infectious-disease specialist and internist, was ecstatic when powerful new drug combinations came into widespread use in 1996, enabling HIV-infected people to measure their lives in decades rather than months. But in recent years, his euphoria has turned bittersweet. (Cimons, 4/14)

**The New York Times: More Than 200 Million Eggs Recalled Over Salmonella Fears**

A company has recalled more than 200 million eggs after an outbreak of salmonella was traced to one of its farms in North Carolina. The federal Food and Drug Administration reported Friday that eggs from the affected farm were distributed to nine states — Colorado, Florida, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia — and were likely connected to 22 reported cases of salmonella infections. (Fortin, 4/15)

**The Washington Post: Egg Recall 2018: Fear Of Salmonella Contamination After Nearly Two Dozen Were Sickened**

An investigation by the federal agency led to an inspection of the farm, which is located in Hyde County, N.C., and produces 2.3 million eggs a day from 3 million hens. Eggs produced at the farm are distributed to retail stores and restaurants in Colorado, Florida, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and the Carolinas. The recalled eggs were sold under brand names such as Great Value, Country Daybreak, Glenview and Food Lion (Click here for a full list). They were also sold to Waffle House restaurants. (Phillips, 4/15)

**The New York Times: E. Coli Linked To Chopped Romaine Lettuce Infects People In 11 States**

Nearly three dozen people have been infected in an E. coli outbreak linked to chopped romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Ariz., region, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said on Friday. The agency said that it had not yet identified a grower, supplier, distributor or brand common to the 35 cases of infection across 11 states, so it urged consumers to avoid any chopped romaine lettuce from the Yuma area. (Chokshi, 4/13)

**The Washington Post: Romaine Lettuce Recall After E. Coli Outbreak: Prepackaged Salad Mixes May Have Been Tainted, Officials Say**

Fresh Foods Manufacturing, based in Freedom, Pa., is recalling the prepackaged products after learning last week from their romaine lettuce supplier that the vegetables may have been contaminated with Escherichia coli, the U.S. Department of Agriculture said Saturday. Officials said the recalled products have not been tied to any E. coli-related illnesses. The recalled items, which were labeled "Great to Go by Market District," were shipped to retailers in Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia and had sell-by dates of April 13 to April 16. (Phillips, 4/15)

**The Wall Street Journal: Flint Water Tests Show Safe Lead Levels, NRDC Report Says**

The amount of lead in the drinking water of Flint, Mich., has fallen again, according to a study released Friday, as the city works to replace old pipes and takes other measures to ensure the city's water quality is safe. The Natural Resources Defense Council released a report Friday that found lead levels well below the federal action level of 15 parts per billion in a sample of 92 homes. A researcher at Michigan State University found a lead level of 4 ppb at the homes tested. (Maher, 4/13)

**The Associated Press: Cuomo: Number Of NY Registered Organ Donors Tops 5 Million**

Efforts by the state and nonprofit organizations to boost the number of New Yorkers registered to donate their organs are paying off. Gov. Andrew Cuomo has announced that more than 5 million New Yorkers are now enrolled in the New York State Donate Life Registry as organ donors. The Democrat says organ donation rates have reached historic levels thanks to several coordinated efforts. (4/16)

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## **Morning Briefing: Summaries Of The News**

**Monday, April 16, 2018**

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**From Kaiser Health News:**

**KAISER HEALTH NEWS ORIGINAL STORIES**

**1. 'Scary' Lung Disease Now Afflicts More Women Than Men In U.S.**

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), linked to long-term smoking, has traditionally been considered a men's disease. But data show it is now more prevalent

among women — in large part because they embraced smoking much later than men did. (Anna Gorman, 4/16)

## **2. Political Cartoon: 'Breathing Space?'**

Kaiser Health News provides a fresh take on health policy developments with "Political Cartoon: 'Breathing Space?'" by Dan Piraro.

Here's today's health policy haiku:

### **VACANCIES PLAGUE VA**

"The doctor is out"  
Too often heard by our Vets.  
Time to privatize?

- Ernest R. Smith

If you have a health policy haiku to share, please Contact Us and let us know if you want us to include your name. Keep in mind that we give extra points if you link back to a KHN original story.

## **Summaries Of The News:**

### **HEALTH LAW**

## **3. GOP Candidates Shy Away From Once-Favorite 'Repeal And Replace' Talking Point**

After years of using the health law as a rallying cry with voters, Republican candidates are keeping quiet on the topic. "Yeah, we probably can't talk credibly about repeal and replace anymore," said Rep. Tom MacArthur (R-N.J.).

The Washington Post: Republicans Lose Their Favorite Campaign Message: Repealing Obamacare

The campaign website of Rep. Mike Bishop (R-Mich.) doesn't mention Obamacare, even though Web archives show it once prominently featured promises to vigorously fight the 2010 health-care law. Rep. Garland ? CAndy" Barr (R-Ky.) touted repealing

the Affordable Care Act as one of three top priorities when first running for Congress in 2012. Now his website focuses on tax cuts and job creation instead. In her first House bid in 2014, Rep. Barbara Comstock (R-Va.) said her campaign was about growing the economy, creating jobs and "repealing and replacing Obamacare." She's not talking about that anymore. (Cunningham, 4/14)

In other news on the health law —

Modern Healthcare: 50 Shades Of Healthcare: Bit By Bit, The Affordable Care Act Is Being Remade

As the Trump administration and some in Congress whittle away at the Affordable Care Act, blue states are filling in gaps in an attempt to bolster their markets. Others are picking up chainsaws. Federal moves to pull a form of financial assistance for low-income Americans and slash ACA outreach and advertising last year were followed by the GOP tax law's elimination of the individual mandate penalty, and a proposal to expand health coverage that disregards ACA rules and protections. A bipartisan bill to restore cost-sharing reduction payments and establish a federal reinsurance fund fizzled out. (Livingston, 4/14)

## PHARMACEUTICALS

### **4. Pharma's Anti-Competitive Tactics That Stymie Generics Drugmakers Targeted By Officials, Lawmakers**

Generic drug developers need samples of brand-name drugs to show that a generic copy is equivalent to the original, but the drug companies are refusing to provide samples of their products. In other pharmaceutical news: an appeals court hands the industry a victory in price gouging case; a former Mallinckrodt employee claims she was fired for warning company about illegal sales practices; and a shortage of EpiPens outside the U.S.

The New York Times: Drug Company 'Shenanigans'? 9 To Block Generics Come Under Federal Scrutiny

Trump administration officials, seeking ways to lower drug costs, are targeting pharmaceutical companies that refuse to provide samples of their products to generic drug companies, making it impossible to create inexpensive generic copies of a brand-name medicine. Dr. Scott Gottlieb, the commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, said recently that drug makers must "end the shenanigans" that prevent competing products from reaching the market. (Pear, 4/14)

Stat: Maryland Law That Punished Generic Price Gouging Is Ruled Unconstitutional  
In a victory for the pharmaceutical industry, a federal appeals court panel ruled that a Maryland state law that was enacted to punish generic drug makers for price gouging is unconstitutional. In explaining its decision, the panel sided with a trade group for generic drug makers that argued the state law violates interstate commerce by giving Maryland officials the right to govern business outside the state, effectively providing "unprecedented powers to regulate the national pharmaceutical market." (Silverman, 4/13)

Stat: Former Mallinckrodt Employee Alleges The Ingredients In A Best-Selling Drug Are A Mystery

In a sensational lawsuit, a former Mallinckrodt (MNK) employee claims that she was fired for repeatedly warning the drug maker about a host of allegedly illegal activities designed to boost sales of a key drug. Those practices included running a "sham" patient assistance program and refusing to provide payers with clinical data that would be used for making coverage decisions. Moreover, executives were allegedly unaware of the ingredients in the best-selling Achtar drug, which is used to treat infantile spasms and often prescribed for more than a dozen other maladies. (Silverman, 4/13)

Reuters: EpiPen Shortages Seen In Canada, UK But U.S. Supply Intact

Mylan N.V.'s emergency allergy antidote EpiPen is in short supply in Canada and Britain, but remains available in the United States, the treatment's manufacturer said on Friday. EpiPens deliver potentially lifesaving doses of the generic drug epinephrine, via an automatic injector that a patient or caregiver can administer in the event of severe allergic reaction. "We are shipping product. Currently there is no shortage in the U.S.," said Steve Danehy, a spokesman for Pfizer Inc, which produces the global supply of EpiPens for Mylan out of a single facility near St. Louis, Missouri. (Berkrot and Erman, 4/14)

## WOMEN'S HEALTH

### **5. Supreme Court Justice's Retirement Rumors Have Anti-Abortion Activists Maneuvering To Trigger Lawsuit**

Some in the movement see the possible retirement of Justice Anthony Kennedy as their chance to have the Supreme Court revisit Roe v. Wade. Other activists want to focus on more incremental gains instead, though.

Politico: Abortion Foes Seize On Chance To Overturn Roe

The anti-abortion movement believes it's one Donald Trump-appointed Supreme Court

justice away from a shot at overturning Roe v. Wade, and advocates are teeing up what they hope will be the winning challenge. From Iowa to South Carolina, lawmakers are proposing some of the most far-reaching abortion restrictions in a generation, hoping their legislation triggers the lawsuit that eventually makes it to the high court. (Haberkorn, 4/15)

And in Arizona —

Arizona Republic: Arizona Gov. Ducey Signs Laws On Abortion, English-Only Contracts

Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey ended the week by signing two high-profile bills into law, measures dealing with questions for abortion patients and another dealing with non-English versions of insurance contracts. Ducey inked dozens of bills this week, but Senate Bill 1394 and House Bill 2083 are among the most controversial he has signed so far this year. (Gardiner, 4/14)

## **6. Women Being Sucked Into Assembly Line-Like System That Drums Up Patients For Lawsuits Against Companies**

The tactic of suing companies over potentially harmful products is a lucrative one, and those looking to get a chunk of that money have made a business out of luring women into sometimes unnecessary procedures to make them a more valuable plaintiff.

The New York Times: How Profiteers Lure Women Into Often-Unneeded Surgery  
Jerri Plummer was at home in Arkansas, watching television with her three children, when a stranger called to warn that her life was in danger. The caller identified herself only as Yolanda. She told Ms. Plummer that the vaginal mesh implant supporting her bladder was defective and needed to be removed. If Ms. Plummer didn't act quickly, the caller urged, she might die. (Goldstein and Silver-Greenberg, 4/14)

Bloomberg: C.R. Bard Must Pay Punitive \$35 Million In Vaginal-Mesh Case  
C.R. Bard Inc. was ordered to pay \$35 million in punitive damages to a woman who blamed her injuries on the company's vaginal mesh inserts in the medical supplier's first case over the controversial devices to go to trial in New Jersey. The punishment award handed down Friday brings to \$68 million the amount that Bard must pay to Mary McGinnis and her husband. McGinnis said Bard inserts designed to bolster organs and address incontinence issues were defective and left her in permanent pain. (Feeley, 4/13)

MEDICAID

## **7. Virginia Lawmakers Add Tougher Medicaid Work Requirements In Attempt To Reach Agreement On Budget**

The House Appropriations Committee passed the new version of the budget that includes a handful of amendments to woo Senate Republicans. The lawmakers in the upper chamber had blocked the budget earlier because of the House's attempts to expand the state's Medicaid program. Medicaid news comes out of Colorado, Tennessee, Mississippi, Florida and Maine, as well.

The Associated Press: House Panel OKs Bill With Medicaid Work Requirement Change

A committee of Virginia lawmakers has advanced a budget plan expanding Medicaid but tightening part of a work requirement plan House lawmakers approved earlier this year. The House Appropriations Committee approved two bills on bipartisan votes Friday, sending them to the full chamber. Lawmakers are taking another stab at passing a budget after attempts during the regular session ended in a stalemate over disagreement about Medicaid expansion. A final deal could be weeks away. (4/13)

The Washington Post: Va. House Committee Tries Again For Medicaid Expansion, With Tougher Work Rules

On Friday, the committee passed essentially the same House budget that died in March — but with a handful of amendments meant to make expansion more palatable to the Senate. Two Republicans in that chamber have said they would team up with Democrats on Medicaid under certain conditions. After the meeting, House Appropriations Committee Chairman S. Chris Jones (R-Suffolk) declined to say whether he thought the plan would satisfy the two senators, Emmett W. Hanger (Augusta) and Frank W. Wagner (Virginia Beach). (Vozzella, 4/13)

Denver Post: To Combat Rising Health Care Costs, Should Colorado Let People Buy Into Medicaid?

Medicaid, the nation's joint federal-state health insurance program for the poor, is often described as providing a safety net — something to save the neediest people from disaster. But, as health insurance costs spiral rapidly upward, Colorado lawmakers and health care advocates increasingly say that it is the entire state that is facing a crisis. So, some of them are now proposing a radical, potentially first-in-the-nation idea: Why not let anyone buy their way into Medicaid, regardless of income? (Ingold, 4/15)

Nashville Tennessean: Can Tennessee Expand Health Care For Working Poor? Haslam Asks Behind Closed Doors

From the outside, lawmakers' entering [Gov. Bill] Haslam's office may have looked

innocuous. But inside, the big idea the governor floated would have defined his legacy. Haslam asked if they would support extending federally funded health coverage to hundreds of thousands of low-income Tennesseans. The head of the state Medicaid program had met in late March with the federal Medicaid administrator to talk about possibly expanding coverage. (Ebert and Boucher, 4/13)

The Associated Press: State Supreme Court Orders Medicaid To Pay \$2M To Hospitals

The Mississippi Supreme Court is ordering the state's Medicaid program to pay back \$2 million to 12 hospitals, saying the agency improperly skimmed on reimbursement for services. The unanimous Thursday decision upholds a suit the hospitals filed saying the state-federal health insurance program had illegally changed its payment formula for radiology and laboratory services. (4/15)

Health News Florida: AIDS Foundation Protests Over Medicaid Contracting

The Florida Agency for Health Care Administration's headquarters in Tallahassee were the site Thursday of the third demonstration in as many days by supporters of the AIDS Healthcare Foundation. A group of about 30 people from Northwest Florida gathered to protest the state's decision to block the nation's largest nonprofit AIDS health-care provider from South Florida's Medicaid managed-care market. (4/13)

PBS NewsHour: Mainers Voted To Expand Medicaid Last Year. Could These States Be Next?

Republicans in Congress may have relented on their attempts to repeal the entire Affordable Care Act, but the battle has shifted to states. Citizens in Idaho, Utah, Missouri and Nebraska have taken Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act into their own hands via ballot initiative campaigns, hoping to force statewide votes to either adopt or reject expansion this coming November. (4/13)

NPR: New Medicaid Requirements Signals Trump Crackdown On Public Assistance Programs

Michel Martin speaks to Diane Rowland from The Kaiser Family Foundation about a new order from President Trump to establish work requirements for recipients of Medicaid and other federal benefits. (4/15)

MARKETPLACE

## **8. New CVS Hire Signals Company's Interest In Providing Medical Services Directly To Consumers**



Marc-David Munk, a proponent of in-clinic diagnostics and treatment, will become CVS's chief medical officer for its MinuteClinics.

Bloomberg: CVS Hires Doctor From Health Startup In Sign Of Medical Ambition  
CVS Health Corp. is hiring a senior executive from a startup that specializes in primary-care clinics, a sign that the drugstore chain is serious about providing more medical services directly to consumers as it moves toward acquiring health insurer Aetna Inc. Marc-David Munk will become CVS's chief medical officer for its MinuteClinics, and will oversee "expanded health-care services across the CVS Health enterprise," the pharmacy and drug-benefits manager said in a statement Friday. Munk was previously chief medical officer at Iora Health, a startup that operates about two dozen physician practices. (Tracer, 4/13)

In other industry news —

The Star Tribune: UnitedHealth Pushes Back In Whistleblower Case  
UnitedHealth Group is pushing back against a federal whistleblower case, alleging the Justice Department's arguments would mean the agency that runs the federal Medicare program has broken its contract with the giant health insurance company. In early 2017, the federal government joined a whistleblower lawsuit from a former UnitedHealth Group employee in the Twin Cities who alleged, among other things, that the nation's largest insurer had wrongly received excess Medicare revenue by reviewing medical charts to boost payments without also making data corrections that would have saved the government money. (Snowbeck, 4/14)

Atlanta Journal-Constitution: Direct Primary Care: A New Solution For Rising Health Care Costs?

There's a new movement going on in primary and family care medicine that could deliver better care, cheaper prices and more personalized attention to health care consumers — all while cutting the insurance middle man out of the equation. (Thimou, 4/12)

## GOVERNMENT POLICY

### **9. Pure Caffeine Products Banned From Being Sold In Bulk Directly To Consumers**

The FDA says that the products "present a significant public health threat" and that it will immediately begin removing them from the market.

The Wall Street Journal: FDA Bans Sale Of Caffeine In Bulk Directly To Consumers  
Online shopping has made it easy for consumers to affordably buy highly concentrated caffeine in bulk, whether to mix it into a workout shake or using it as an alternative to a morning coffee. However, a U.S. regulator said that small amounts of pure caffeine products have proven to be dangerous and even fatal. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has issued guidance banning the sale of pure or highly concentrated caffeine in powder or liquid forms as a dietary supplement in large quantities directly to consumers, calling it a significant public health threat. (Hufford, 4/13)

Bloomberg: FDA Bans Bulk Retail Sales Of Pure Caffeine, Citing Health Risks  
These products “present a significant public health threat,” and the FDA will immediately begin seeking to remove such products from the market, according to agency guidance released Friday. In 2015 and 2016, the agency issued warning letters to seven distributors following the death of two young people who ingested powdered caffeine. It has continued to see an uptick of similar products sold online. (Saunders, 4/13)

## PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

### **10. A Vaccine For Opioid Addiction? It Might Not Be That Far Off**

The vaccine would stop opioids by effectively blocking them from reaching the brain by way of the circulatory system. It is one suggestion in a renewed push to treat addiction like a disease rather than a lack of willpower or character flaw.

The New York Times: A Drug To End Addiction? Scientists Are Working On It.  
Scrambling for ways to contain America's out-of-control opioid crisis, some experts in the field are convinced that one bit of good advice is to just say no to the enduring “just say no” antidrug message. Addiction, they say, is not a question of free will or a correctable character flaw, as a lot of people would like to believe. Rather, it is an affliction of the brain that needs to be treated as one would any chronic illness. One possible approach, an experimental vaccine, draws attention in this offering from Retro Report, a series of short video documentaries exploring major news stories of the past and their lasting impact. (Haberman, 4/15)

The Associated Press: Feds: Increase Medication-Based Treatment For Opioids  
Deep within President Donald Trump's plan to combat opioid abuse, overshadowed by his call for the death penalty for some drug traffickers, is a push to expand the use of medication to treat addiction. It's a rare instance in which Trump isn't trying roll back Obama administration policies, and where fractious Republicans and Democrats in Congress have come together. Trump declared last month that “we're making medically

assisted treatment more available and affordable," even as Congress was working to approve \$1 billion for a new treatment grant program for opioids as part of the massive spending bill to keep the government running. (Alonso-Zaldivar, 4/16)

And in news in the states —

**The CT Mirror: CT Opioid Lawsuits Advancing In Face Of Settlement Effort**

Nearly two dozen Connecticut cities and towns are scheduled to soon confront Purdue Pharma and other opioid makers in court over what they say are the pharmaceuticals' deceptive practices. Meanwhile, a federal judge in Ohio is trying to resolve through a massive settlement more than 400 federal lawsuits brought by cities, counties and Native American tribes against central figures in the national opioid tragedy. (Radelat, 4/12)

**Arizona Republic: Sober Homes Will Face Licensing And Regulation Under New Law.** Sober homes that provide people a place to live while recovering from drug and alcohol addiction will be subject to licensing and increased regulatory oversight by the state under a new law. Senate Bill 1465 will require sober homes to become licensed within 90 days after the Arizona Department of Health Services establishes licensing rules. (Alltucker, 4/14)

## **11. Genetic Testing Is A Hot New Benefit For Employees, But Researchers Say It Might Do More Harm Than Good**

Experts caution that extending use of the tests to the broader population may lead some people of average risk to forgo recommended screenings or, on the flip side, lead to unnecessary and extreme medical procedures. In other public health news: a smart gun, drug-resistant typhoid, viruses, hypertension, the dangers of sitting, bright lights for hospital patients, and more.

**The New York Times: Employees Jump At Genetic Testing. Is That A Good Thing?** Levi Strauss & Company introduced a novel benefit for employees at its San Francisco headquarters last fall: free genetic screening to assess their hereditary risks for certain cancers and high cholesterol. Chip Bergh, Levi's chief executive, said he had hoped that the tests would spur employees to take preventive health steps and in that way reduce the company's health care costs. But even Mr. Bergh was surprised by the turnout. Of the 1,100 eligible Levi's employees, more than half took the genetic tests. Now, he wants to extend the benefit to employees in other cities. (Singer, 4/15)

#### The Wall Street Journal: Why No One Wants To Back The Gun Of The Future

It was supposed to be the dawn of a new era of "smart guns." Spurred by the deaths of 20 young children in the 2012 Sandy Hook elementary school shooting, Silicon Valley set out to make safer, technologically advanced weapons that could only be fired by their owners. Venture-capital luminary Ron Conway, known for his early investments in Google and PayPal, led the charge, raising millions for grants aimed at jump-starting the smart-gun industry. (Elinson and Palazzolo, 4/14)

#### The New York Times: 'We're Out Of Options': Doctors Battle Drug-Resistant Typhoid Outbreak

The first known epidemic of extensively drug-resistant typhoid is spreading through Pakistan, infecting at least 850 people in 14 districts since 2016, according to the National Institute of Health Islamabad. The typhoid strain, resistant to five types of antibiotics, is expected to disseminate globally, replacing weaker strains where they are endemic. Experts have identified only one remaining oral antibiotic — azithromycin — to combat it; one more genetic mutation could make typhoid untreatable in some areas. (Baumgaertner, 4/13)

The New York Times: Trillions Upon Trillions Of Viruses Fall From The Sky Each Day  
High in the Sierra Nevada mountains of Spain, an international team of researchers set out four buckets to gather a shower of viruses falling from the sky. Scientists have surmised there is a stream of viruses circling the planet, above the planet's weather systems but below the level of airline travel. Very little is known about this realm, and that's why the number of deposited viruses stunned the team in Spain. Each day, they calculated, some 800 million viruses cascade onto every square meter of the planet. (Robbins, 4/13)

#### NPR: Doctors Keep Hypertension Patients Honest With A Drug Test

There's an irony at the heart of the treatment of high blood pressure. The malady itself often has no symptoms, yet the medicines to treat it — and to prevent a stroke or heart attack later — can make people feel crummy. "It's not that you don't want to take it, because you know it's going to help you. But it's the getting used to it," says Sharon Fulson, a customer service representative from Nashville, Tenn., who is trying to monitor and control her hypertension. (Farmer, 4/16)

#### Los Angeles Times: Too Much Sitting May Thin The Part Of Your Brain That's Important For Memory, Study Suggests

If you want to take a good stroll down memory lane, new research suggests you'd better get out of that chair more often. In a first-of-its-kind study, researchers have found that in people middle-aged and older, a brain structure that is key to learning and

memory is plumpest in those who spend the most time standing up and moving. At every age, prolonged sitters show less thickness in the medial temporal lobe and the subregions that make it up, the study found. (Healy, 4/13)

#### The Wall Street Journal: The Benefits Of Bright Light For Hospital Patients

Some hospitals and nursing homes are seeing the light—and rethinking the dim glow that illuminates most patients' rooms. Once an afterthought, lighting is getting attention as researchers see how it affects a person's mood, energy and sleep. A clinical trial at Mount Sinai Health System in New York City is testing whether brighter lights in cancer patients' rooms in the morning can make them feel less tired and depressed and help them sleep through the night. (Lagnado, 4/14)

#### The Washington Post: Birth Control Ban Imagined In Art Exhibition

Remember the early 2000s, when the United States passed laws banning condoms and the pill, and sex was officially designated for reproductive purposes only? Of course you don't — it never happened. But a new art exhibition in New York imagines what life would be like if it had. "Museum of Banned Objects," at the Ace Hotel New York Gallery through April 30 (continuing online after that), looks at the history of "The Ban" from the vantage point of a dystopian future. The law — sweeping legislation in which all reproductive-health products and contraceptives were made illegal — took birth control underground. (Blakemore, 4/14)

#### The Washington Post: Marriage Researchers Explain How Marriage And Intimate Relationships Affect Your Health

Is hostility in your marriage stressing or depressing you? Does your partner have a chronic disorder? Then watch out. Although married people generally have better health than others, studies have found, partners in these two situations can face an increased risk of obesity and cardiovascular disease. Janice K. Kiecolt-Glaser, director of the Institute for Behavioral Medicine Research at Ohio State University, and Stephanie J. Wilson, a postdoctoral researcher in her lab, study — and explain here — the health effects of intimate relationships. (Rusting, 4/15)

Kaiser Health News: 'Scary' Lung Disease Now Afflicts More Women Than Men In U.S. Joan Cousins was among a generation of young women who heard — and bought into the idea — that puffing on a cigarette was sophisticated, modern, even liberating. No one suspected it would make them more than equal to men in suffering a choking, life-shortening lung disease. "Everybody smoked. It was the cool thing to do," said Cousins, who smoked her first cigarette 67 years ago at age 16. (Gorman, 4/16)

The New York Times: You Share Everything With Your Bestie. Even Brain Waves. A friend will help you move, goes an old saying, while a good friend will help you move a body. And why not? Moral qualms aside, that good friend would likely agree the victim was an intolerable jerk who had it coming and, jeez, you shouldn't have done this but where do you keep the shovel? Researchers have long known that people choose friends who are much like themselves in a wide array of characteristics: of a similar age, race, religion, socioeconomic status, educational level, political leaning, pulchritude rating, even handgrip strength. The impulse toward homophily, toward bonding with others who are the least other possible, is found among traditional hunter-gatherer groups and advanced capitalist societies alike. (Angier, 4/16)

The New York Times: Friendship's Dark Side: 'We Need A Common Enemy' As a rule, friendship is considered an unalloyed good, one of life's happy-happies, like flowers and fresh fruit. "Report: It Would Probably Be Nice Having Friends," read a recent headline in The Onion. Ha ha! Of course it's "kind of fun" and "pretty cool" to "have a few select people in your life to do stuff with on a regular basis." Most people can name at least half a dozen people they view as reasonably good friends. The only society where people don't have any friends, according to Daniel Hruschka, an evolutionary anthropologist at Arizona State University, is found in the science fiction of C.J. Cherryh's "Foreigner" series. (Angier, 4/16)

## **12. Older Americans Without Adult Children Need To Be Proactive In Creating Aging Plans, Experts Say**

There's a growing population of older adults without children having to navigate getting older and the pitfalls that come with it. But it can be done successfully, experts say. In other aging news: the financial toll of dementia, older patients who have been living with HIV, positive perceptions about aging, and more.

The New York Times: Single? No Kids? Don't Fret: How To Plan Care In Your Later Years

Sarah Peveler lacks a support system that many older people count on: their adult children. But Ms. Peveler, 71, who is divorced and childless, said she was determined not to let fear of an uncertain future get the best of her. To help avoid the potential perils of a solitary old age, Ms. Peveler is carrying out a multipronged, go-it-alone plan. A key part of it was to find a small community where she could make friends and walk nearly everywhere, without worrying about the hazards of ice and snow. (Garland, 4/23)

The San Jose Mercury News: How Dementia Can Drain A Family's Life Savings If Denis Winter suffered from heart failure, cancer or almost any other deadly disease,

his family could rest assured that his care would be largely covered by insurance. But Winter has Alzheimer's disease. So the extraordinary cost of his care — \$8,500 a month, or \$102,000 a year — is borne entirely by his wife, Linda. It is quickly draining their lifetime of savings. (Krieger, 4/15)

The Washington Post: HIV-Infected People Live Longer But Are Get Age-Related Diseases Hit Them Younger

David Hardy has been treating HIV-infected patients since the early 1980s, when the epidemic began. In those days, people newly diagnosed with AIDS lived for only about six months. Hardy, an infectious-disease specialist and internist, was ecstatic when powerful new drug combinations came into widespread use in 1996, enabling HIV-infected people to measure their lives in decades rather than months. But in recent years, his euphoria has turned bittersweet. (Cimons, 4/14)

The Washington Post: Aging People Are Feeling Younger

We've heard all the clichés about aging: "You're as young [or old] as you feel." "Age is just a number." "You're not getting older, you're getting better." "Seventy is the new 50." Well-intentioned, perhaps. Offensive, to some. Patronizing, to be sure. But could they be true? Maybe science has started to catch up with these tired phrases. Researchers have discovered that many people feel good about themselves as they get older. (Cimons, 4/14)

The Washington Post: Steps To Take To Live An Active And Happy Life When You're Old

In good weather, Sylvia Lask logs thousands of steps a day on her Fitbit as she pushes down New York City sidewalks with her walker. As frequently as once a week, she heads to Albany, walker and all, to lobby state government officials about mental-health issues. Florence Lee drives in to Manhattan on her own from Queens on Thursday nights during the New York Philharmonic's season for performances of the vaunted orchestra. Larry White still travels around New York State, as he has for the past 10 years, to help prison inmates manage long sentences. (Bruno, 4/14)

The New York Times: The Clinical Trial Is Open. The Elderly Need Not Apply.

Dr. Ken Covinsky, a geriatrician and researcher, was sitting in his office at the San Francisco VA Medical Center last month, browsing through a medical journal on his computer. When he came across a study of sodium excretion, he waded into the abstract. The research team, mostly based at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, had used 24-hour urine collections to estimate how much salt Americans take in each day. (Span, 4/13)

### **13. Company Recalls More Than 200 Million Eggs Following Salmonella Outbreak**

Rose Acre Farms is recalling the products after federal officials tied illnesses to the company's facility in North Carolina.

The New York Times: More Than 200 Million Eggs Recalled Over Salmonella Fears  
A company has recalled more than 200 million eggs after an outbreak of salmonella was traced to one of its farms in North Carolina. The federal Food and Drug Administration reported Friday that eggs from the affected farm were distributed to nine states — Colorado, Florida, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia — and were likely connected to 22 reported cases of salmonella infections. (Fortin, 4/15)

The Washington Post: Egg Recall 2018: Fear Of Salmonella Contamination After Nearly Two Dozen Were Sickened

An investigation by the federal agency led to an inspection of the farm, which is located in Hyde County, N.C., and produces 2.3 million eggs a day from 3 million hens. The recalled eggs were sold under brand names such as Great Value, Country Daybreak, Glenview and Food Lion (Click here for a full list). They were also sold to Waffle House restaurants. (Phillips, 4/15)

Meanwhile —

The New York Times: E. Coli Linked To Chopped Romaine Lettuce Infects People In 11 States

Nearly three dozen people have been infected in an E. coli outbreak linked to chopped romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Ariz., region, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said on Friday. The agency said that it had not yet identified a grower, supplier, distributor or brand common to the 35 cases of infection across 11 states, so it urged consumers to avoid any chopped romaine lettuce from the Yuma area. (Chokshi, 4/13)

The Washington Post: Romaine Lettuce Recall After E. Coli Outbreak: Prepackaged Salad Mixes May Have Been Tainted, Officials Say

Fresh Foods Manufacturing, based in Freedom, Pa., is recalling the prepackaged products after learning last week from their romaine lettuce supplier that the vegetables may have been contaminated with Escherichia coli, the U.S. Department of Agriculture said Saturday. Officials said the recalled products have not been tied to any E. coli-related illnesses. The recalled items, which were labeled "Great to Go by Market



District," were shipped to retailers in Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia and had sell-by dates of April 13 to April 16. (Phillips, 4/15)

## STATE WATCH

### **14. State Highlights: Report Finds Lead Levels In Flint Water Are Safe; Organ Donation Rates In New York Reach New Highs After Enrollment Push**

Media outlets report on news from Michigan, New York, Maryland, Florida, Illinois, Minnesota, Texas and Missouri.

The Wall Street Journal: Flint Water Tests Show Safe Lead Levels, NRDC Report Says  
The amount of lead in the drinking water of Flint, Mich., has fallen again, according to a study released Friday, as the city works to replace old pipes and takes other measures to ensure the city's water quality is safe. The Natural Resources Defense Council released a report Friday that found lead levels well below the federal action level of 15 parts per billion in a sample of 92 homes. A researcher at Michigan State University found a lead level of 4 ppb at the homes tested. (Maher, 4/13)

The Associated Press: Cuomo: Number Of NY Registered Organ Donors Tops 5 Million  
Efforts by the state and nonprofit organizations to boost the number of New Yorkers registered to donate their organs are paying off. Gov. Andrew Cuomo has announced that more than 5 million New Yorkers are now enrolled in the New York State Donate Life Registry as organ donors. The Democrat says organ donation rates have reached historic levels thanks to several coordinated efforts. (4/16)

The Baltimore Sun: Maryland Lawmakers Pass Legislation To Help Preserve The Fertility Of Cancer Patients

The legislation requires insurance companies to pay for standard fertility preservation procedures, such as sperm and egg freezing, for people who undergo medical treatment that would result in infertility. This includes chemotherapy treatment for cancer patients. Gov. Larry Hogan still must sign the bill for it to take effect. A spokeswoman, Amelia Chasse, said the governor is waiting for an opinion from the attorney general's office. (McDaniels, 4/13)

Health News Florida: Living Kidney Donation Might Be The Answer To National Shortage

Blayne Badura thought that he had this kidney disease thing figured out. For two decades, he had worked as a Seminole County Deputy, a job that he loved and allowed

him to provide for his wife and two children, while doing dialysis three times a week. "Work kept my mind off my own illness it sounds crazy but it's true. When I went to work I didn't have to worry about me. I dealt with other peoples' problems." (Prieur, 4/16)

#### Modern Healthcare: Healthcare Providers Do More To Fight Hunger, But Efforts Could Be Hindered By Funding Cuts

Working in partnership with the Greater Chicago Food Depository, a "Fresh Truck" arrives at one of 12 clinic sites once every other month and stays for 90 minutes. Cook County staffers screen patients for food needs with a two-question survey. Those identified as being food-insecure get a voucher to take part in the distributions. Such efforts provide patients a small opportunity to gain access to nutritious food, but arguably the program's greatest impact is in enrolling people into government aid programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, known as WIC. In 2016 and 2017, nearly 300 patients who visited a distribution site were enrolled and began receiving benefits. (Johnson, 4/14)

#### Pioneer Press: MN Legislature Eyes Regional Mental Health Centers

The bill would provide \$80 million for state grant programs to construct six mental health crisis centers around the state that cities, counties, hospitals and other public entities would operate to serve mentally ill and chemically dependent people. The plan also would grant the funding to build three long-term housing facilities to support mental health services. Numerous studies have reported huge gaps in Minnesota's mental health services. The crisis center proposal "would be a start in closing those gaps," said Sen. David Senjem, the Rochester Republican who introduced the bills and chairs the Capital Investment Committee that will decide whether to fund it. (Salisbury, 4/15)

#### Health News Florida: Orlando Health Wants To Share What They Learned From Responding To The Pulse Shooting

With the recent Parkland shooting, a local hospital that responded to the Pulse nightclub shooting wants to start a nationwide conversation about emergency preparedness. Orlando Health released a video and report, detailing each team's location and response that night, along with hospital-wide recommendations for responding to similar events. (Prieur, 5/16)

#### Dallas Morning News: Medical Records Of Texas Health Patients May Have Been Exposed In Data Breach

Medical records, driver's license and Social Security numbers, and other personal information of Texas Health Resources patients may have been accessed unlawfully,

the Arlington-based health system is warning. Texas Health is one of North Texas' largest provider groups with more than 350 community access points. Over 1.7 million patients visit its physician offices annually, public documents show. (Rice, 4/15)

Health News Florida: Counties Throughout Florida Get Grants To Fight Zika Before Mosquito Season

Orange County is putting a \$325,000 grant it got from the Florida Department of Health toward preventing the spread of Zika. Ten counties throughout the state received grants. "We will use that money to buy equipment, handheld sprayers, truck-mounted sprayers, backpack sprayers as well as control materials." (Prieur, 5/16)

Kansas City Star: Deadly Shootings Result From Low-Level Marijuana Drug Deals  
Timothy Durden Jr. made it a habit to throw his arms around his grandmother, plant a big kiss on her cheek and proclaim, "I love you, Grannie." The former Park Hill High School basketball and football player had a passion for joking, dancing, lifting weights. But the 18-year-old also enjoyed "smoking his weed," family wrote in his obituary, and that habit cost him his life when he allegedly tried to rob the teenager who was selling him 2 ounces of marijuana in the Northland. (Rise, 4/14)

## EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

### **15. Perspectives: Flint Residents Are Being Asked To Trust A Government That Betrayed Them**

Editorials focus on the crisis of trust among Flint residents as the state cuts off its bottled water program.

The Detroit News: Flint Water Is Safe But Trust Lacking

As Flint moves on from its water crisis, residents still lack faith in elected leaders who didn't do enough to prevent lead from poisoning the city's water supply back in 2014. For months now, however, the water has registered normal lead levels and families can drink their water without fear. (4/15)

The Washington Post: I Am A Flint Resident. I Am Done Paying For Water That Is Not Safe.

About a week ago, I was having a bad day. My neck was killing me, I had a migraine, my WiFi was down, and I had spent over an hour working with customer service to resolve the issue. Drained, I decided to wash my dishes, eat some lunch and take a nap. I went to the kitchen sink, flicked the switch on my PUR water filter and turned on the faucet. Nothing came out. My water had been shut off. (Tunde Olaniran, 4/16)

Mother Jones: Officials Say Flint's Water Is Safe. Residents Say It's Not. Scientists Say It's Complicated.

Four years ago, the city of Flint changed its water source from Lake Huron to the Flint River. Almost immediately, foul-smelling, discolored water began coming out of city taps. For almost two years, the mostly low-income and black residents were left to cook, drink, and bathe in water that was contaminated with lead. The crisis led to criminal charges leveled at more than a dozen state and city officials, thousands of children with dangerous levels of lead in their bloodstreams, and the collapse of confidence between residents and their government. Now, at the fourth anniversary of the water crisis, state and city officials say the crisis has ended and Flint's water is safe to drink. But residents aren't buying it. (Nathalie Baptiste, 4/16)

## **16. Viewpoints: Americans Are Saying Improve Obamacare Not Kill It; Getting Tough On Opioid Epidemic Is No Cure**

Editorial pages focus on these and other health topics.

The Washington Post: Americans Are Sticking By Obamacare. If Only The GOP Would Stop Trying To Kill It.

The Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, has endured attack after attack, yet it has not collapsed. Instead, it proves repeatedly that it fills a substantial gap in the U.S. health-care system. This should finally cause some reflection among those who have been trying to kill it. President Trump's Health and Human Services Department admitted this month that 11.8 million people signed up for private insurance plans through the Obamacare marketplaces this year, despite slashed funding for advertising and an open-enrollment period that was shortened by half. HHS played up a rise in premiums relative to last year's, but most people on the Obamacare exchanges receive federal subsidies, keeping their costs steady. The average subsidized premium is only \$89 per month. (4/15)

The New York Times: Would Americans Accept Putting Health Care On A Budget?

If you wanted to get control of your household spending, you'd set a budget and spend no more than it allowed. You might wonder why we don't just do the same for spending on American health care. Though government budgets are different from household budgets, the idea of putting a firm limit on health care spending is far from unknown. Many countries, including Canada, Switzerland and Britain, pay hospitals entirely or partly this way. (Austin Frakt, 4/16)

The Hill: Longer Sentences Won't Stop The Opioid Epidemic

More than 60,000 people died from a drug overdose in 2016 — most of them due to

opioids like fentanyl — and no region in America has escaped this tragedy. The numbers now show that the epidemic has struck both rural and urban parts of this country. This is first and foremost a public health crisis. But it's also a major challenge for law enforcement and one that calls for fresh solutions. As we confront this surge in deaths, we must be careful not to repeat the mistakes of past drug epidemics. (Ronald Serpas, 4/16)

The Washington Post: The Facts About Work Requirements Are Being Ignored. Here's Why.

Poor able-bodied adults already work, although they're often less consistently connected to the job market than the nonpoor. But adding work requirements, as opposed to measures that support existing work efforts of the poor, is likely to hurt their present living standards and their kids' future mobility. Programs such as nutritional, health and housing support often make it easier for a low-income person to be able to hold a job, and children who grow up in families that receive these benefits tend to have better adult life outcomes than comparable kids who don't receive the supports. (Jared Bernstein, 4/16)

The Washington Post: Have You Noticed How Poor People Are Bankrupting The Government? Neither Have We.

Have you noticed how spending on welfare and other benefits for the poor is bankrupting the federal government? Neither have we. On Monday, the Congressional Budget Office forecast a vast increase in the federal debt over the next decade, due in large part to the GOP's recent \$1.5 trillion tax cut, most of which goes to businesses and wealthy households. On the domestic spending side, the biggies remain middle-class programs such as Medicare and Social Security. Yet President Trump and the Republican leadership in Congress are on an election-year campaign to "reform" means-tested safety-net programs. The day after the CBO released its figures, in fact, Mr. Trump ordered federal agencies to review all such programs — with an eye toward toughening work requirements for their recipients. On Thursday, the House Agriculture Committee unveiled a proposed 2018 farm bill that would make it harder for non-working adults to get food-buying aid under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). (4/15)

Los Angeles Times: Tax Policy Is A Bore, Until They Take Your Social Security And Medicare Away

Tax cuts do not pay for themselves — not the Trump tax cuts, nor in any other case in modern U.S. practice. So we face only two possible courses of action: Either we tax ourselves more, or we dismantle the social safety net (in particular, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid) that protects Americans from destitution or disability. Which is

the right direction for our country to pursue? One political movement has its answer at the ready: Slash the safety net. (Edward Klein, 4/15)

#### USA Today: When Tax Cuts Are Disguised Future Tax Increases

Neither party has shown much willingness recently to address government's biggest spending problem: benefit programs such as Social Security and Medicare, whose costs rise automatically each year based on how many people retire and what health care providers think they should be paid. Where does that leave us? By (Morton) Friedman's analysis, it leaves some of the biggest tax hikes in history waiting for the next generation of tax payers, many of whom can't even vote yet. (4/15)

#### Miami Herald: We Want Gun Dealers To Conduct Instant Background Checks Before Selling Ammunition

Nearly anywhere in America, a felon with a violent criminal history can walk into a gun store and walk out minutes later – no questions asked – with hundreds of rounds of ammunition for an assault weapon. We already have laws on the books designed to prevent such sales, but the disturbing truth is that we do not require enforcement. (Sen. Richard Blumenthal and Rep. Debbie Wasserman, 4/13)

#### Miami Herald: I Am Mentally Ill. Why Should My Gun Rights Come With An Asterisk?

To even begin this essay, I'm going to have to admit something uncomfortable. I am mentally ill. I won't bore you with the details, but I'm one of hundreds of thousands of Americans with a tough-to-treat, life-affecting neurosis known as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). (Peter Mandel, 4/14)

#### The Hill: Let's Follow These Celebrities And Create Safe Spaces For People To Discuss Their Mental Health

In last week's People magazine cover story, Mariah Carey disclosed that she has Bipolar II disorder. ...In recent months, Black Panther star Letitia Wright, Prince Harry and rapper Logic have spoken out about their personal experiences with depression and suicide. These public disclosures are critically important in normalizing mental illness and eradicating mental illness stigma. We must follow these celebrities lead and create safe spaces for people to discuss their mental health and get the support and treatment that they need. (Inger E. Burnett-Zeigler, 4/16)

#### USA Today: Make An End-Of-Life Plan Or Lose Money And Choices In Your Dying Days

Kaiser Health News reports that in 2011, Medicare spent \$554 billion and 28%, or about \$170 billion, on patients' last six months of life. After \$170 billion is spent, those patients are still dead. That is simply what Medicare spent. What about the families of those in this study? What might they have spent? Hard dollars can go to diapers, co-

pays for prescription drugs, in-home care giving help, travel to specialists, hotels and parking at the famous acute care hospitals. Hard dollars are lost when working family members have to quit work to care for the ill. In my own extended family I have horror stories. (Hattie Bryant, 4/13)

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# Kaiser Family Foundation's The Latest

April 25, 2018

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## HEALTH REFORM

### Understanding Short-Term Limited Duration Health Insurance

A new analysis of short-term, limited duration health plans for sale through two major national online brokers finds big gaps in the benefits they offer. The analysis finds that 43% of the plans do not cover mental health services, 62% do not cover substance abuse treatment, 71% do not cover inpatient prescription drugs, and none cover maternity care. ([News Release](#), [Issue Brief](#))

## OPIOIDS

### Facebook Live: Confronting Opioid Addiction

On Tuesday, California Healthline columnist Emily Bazelon and contributor Brian Rinker discussed the medications used to treat opioid addiction and the challenges of getting access to them. Among those challenges: Doctors must undergo eight hours of training before they can prescribe buprenorphine. Even then, they face limits on the number of patients they can treat. ([CHL](#))



## SURANCE

### Peak Health Plan Premiums Give Rise To Activism — And Unconventional Solutions

When Garnett and Dave Mellen sent their 19-year-old daughter Gita off to college an hour away at Virginia Commonwealth University last fall, they didn't expect to follow her. But in November, the family received notice that its monthly health insurance premium in Charlottesville would triple for 2018, from \$1,200 to an unaffordable \$3,600. So the Mellens packed their bags and spent time with Gita in her off-campus apartment in Richmond. ([KHN](#), [The Atlantic](#))



## UPCOMING EVENT

### May 9 Forum: Why are Healthcare Prices So High, and What can be Done about Them

At 9 a.m. ET on Wednesday May 9, the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Peterson Center on Healthcare will hold a forum focused on healthcare prices at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center in Washington, DC. Experts in healthcare economics, delivery, and policy will examine reasons behind high prices and variation, how other countries address healthcare prices, and practical strategies in the U.S. At the forum, 10 new analyses will be released examining healthcare prices and utilization in the U.S. compared to other countries, and variations in prices in employer plans over time and by geography.

**RSVP to attend DC Event**

## News and Headlines

News and headlines from Kaiser Health News (KHN) and California Healthline (CHL). Follow KHN on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, and CHL on Facebook and Twitter, for the latest updates.

- Facebook Live: Confronting Opioid Addiction ([CHL](#))
- Peak Health Plan Premiums Give Rise To Activism – And Unconventional Solutions ([KHN](#), [The Atlantic](#))
- Study: Nearly Three-Quarters Of Commonly Used Medical Scopes Tainted By Bacteria ([KHN](#), [Los Angeles Times](#))
- 4 New Ways You Can Avoid Fines For Not Having Health Insurance ([KHN](#))
- Texas Disability Groups Want A Voice At The Table In Gun Debate ([KHN](#), [NPR](#))
- Must-Reads Of The Week From Brianna Labuskes ([KHN](#))
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## Data and Analysis

The latest in health policy data and analysis from the Kaiser Family Foundation.

- Understanding Short-Term Limited Duration Health Insurance ([News Release](#), [Issue Brief](#))
- May 9 Forum: Why are Healthcare Prices So High, and What can be Done about Them? ([Event](#))
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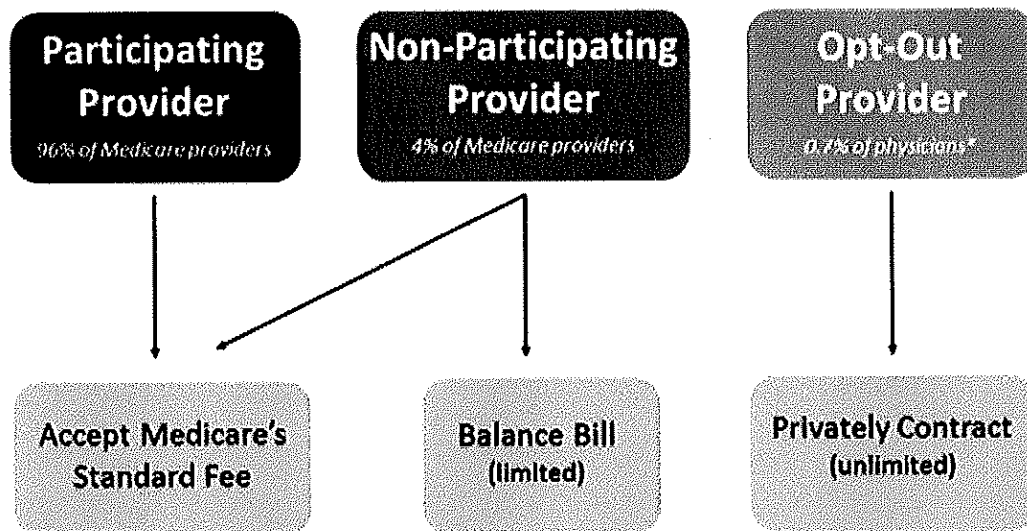
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Figure 1

### Billing Arrangement Options for Physicians and Practitioners in Traditional Medicare



NOTES: \*Other practitioners, such as dentists, may also "opt out" of Medicare, but are not included in this percentage for physicians.



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## First Edition

Friday, April 27, 2018

Visit Kaiser Health News for the latest headlines

Today's early morning highlights from the major news organizations.

### **Kaiser Health News: Dissecting The Rhetoric Vs. Reality Of Trump's Tough Talk On Drug Prices**

President Donald Trump has railed against the high price of prescription drugs and famously bemoaned how pharmaceutical companies are "getting away with murder." Yet, many Americans aren't seeing a change in what they pay out-of-pocket. Trump promised a speech on prescription drug prices, and it's expected anytime. Here's a look at the rhetoric thus far versus the results. (Tribble, 4/27)

### **Kaiser Health News: Podcast: KHN's 'What The Health?' What's Next For The VA?**

The Trump administration has withdrawn the nomination of White House physician Ronny Jackson to head the Department of Veterans Affairs after allegations surfaced about inappropriate handling of prescription drugs, issues with alcohol and difficulties working with other White House medical unit staffers. It is unclear whom the White House will turn to next to take over the helm at the VA. (4/26)

### **California Healthline: Millions Eligible For Food Stamps In California Don't Reap The Benefit**

Millions of low-income Californians eligible for food stamps are not receiving the benefit, earning the state one of the lowest rankings in the nation for its participation in

the program. Just three states — all much more conservative than the Golden State — have lower rates of participation, according to the latest available federal data. The poor performance stands in sharp contrast to California's leadership on enrollment in Medi-Cal, the state's version of Medicaid, which also serves people living in low-income households. (Gorman and Rowan, 4/26)

**Kaiser Health News: Readers Weigh In On Vitamin Use And The Big Pharma-Patient Advocacy Connection**

Letters to the Editor is a periodic Kaiser Health News feature. KHN welcomes all comments and will publish a selection. We edit for length and clarity and require full names. (4/27)

**Politico: 'Veterans Are Losing 6 Different Ways Right Now'**

The implosion of Ronny Jackson's nomination to lead the Veterans Affairs Department may look like the Trump administration's drama of the moment, but it carries big consequences for 9 million veterans in a sprawling health care system with uneven results and a precarious future. Not only does the VA have no leader, the veteran health care community is divided between conservatives inclined to privatize much of veterans' care and those who want to invest more in fixing the current system. The impact can be seen across 170 medical centers and hundreds of clinics of varying quality that treat veterans who served in the U.S. military in every conflict since World War II. (Allen, 4/26)

**The New York Times: For Many, Life In Trump's Orbit Ends In A Crash Landing**

Another day, another casualty. Or two. By the time the sun set Thursday, Dr. Ronny L. Jackson was a failed cabinet nominee whose life had been picked apart for public consumption, and Michael D. Cohen was back in court facing possible criminal prosecution. A ride on President Trump's bullet train can be thrilling, but it is often a brutal journey that leaves some bloodied by the side of the tracks. In only 15 months in office, Mr. Trump has burned through a record number of advisers and associates who have found themselves in legal, professional or personal trouble, or even all three. (Baker and Haberman, 4/26)

**The Washington Post: Ronny Jackson Withdraws As Trump's Nominee To Lead Veterans Affairs, But He Remains Under Scrutiny**

Ronny L. Jackson's withdrawal from consideration to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs stanching an immediate political crisis for the Trump White House, but it sparked new questions over his future as the president's doctor and the fate of the embattled agency. Jackson announced Thursday morning that he was pulling out of the nomination process amid a mushrooming cloud of allegations over professional

misconduct, leaving in limbo a sprawling federal bureaucracy serving 9 million military veterans that President Trump has called a top domestic priority. Yet even as Jackson strongly denied the charges against him, calling them "completely false and fabricated" in a defiant statement, his position as Trump's chief physician and a pending Navy promotion looked shaky. (Rein, Lamothe and Nakamura, 4/26)

#### **Politico: 'Jon Poked The Bear': Tester Braces For Trump's Revenge**

Jon Tester didn't intend to play a central role in taking down President Donald Trump's pick to lead the Veterans Affairs Department. Yet that's exactly what the Montana Democrat ended up doing. And now, Trump is coming after him. (Everett, 4/26)

#### **Politico: The Cost Of Donald Trump's Deserted Government**

Job vacancies are fast becoming a singular threat to President Donald Trump's administration, with a record number of openings that stretch from low-level appointments to the secretary's office at the Department of Veterans Affairs. While civil servants have stepped up to fill gaps, their power and influence is limited — and many senior career government workers have quit or retired since Trump took office, taking institutional knowledge with them. (Woellert, 4/27)

#### **The Associated Press: 20 States Seek To Block Obama's Health Care Law**

Twenty Republican-led states are seeking to temporarily invalidate former President Barack Obama's health care law while their larger lawsuit against it proceeds. In a February suit, Texas and Wisconsin led a coalition arguing that the Affordable Care Act is no longer constitutional after the Republican-backed tax overhaul eliminated fines for not having health care coverage. Sixteen states with Democratic governors later sought to intervene. They suggested that Democratic attorneys general will have to defend the law because President Donald Trump's administration won't. (4/26)

#### **Modern Healthcare: CMS Extension Of Transitional Health Plans Could Ding ACA Market**

The CMS has once again allowed insurers and states to renew so-called transitional health plans that pre-dated Affordable Care Act coverage requirements and that don't have to comply with those rules. State officials have the option to end these "grandmothered" plans in the individual and small-group markets. But about three dozen states have allowed them to continue, even though experts say moving transitional plan enrollees into the ACA-regulated market likely would bring down premiums. (Meyer, 4/26)

#### **USA Today: Drug Copay Assistance Keeps Patients Alive And Prices, Premiums High**

Copayment assistance groups, created to help patients with the increasingly higher

price of drugs to treat medical conditions, are under investigation by federal authorities for possibly skewing the cost of health care to favor drug companies. The probes, noted by several drug makers in their regulatory filings, are slowing contributions to at least two of these assistance groups, charities that sometimes pay top executives salaries of \$300,000 or more. Critics of these groups, such as Patients for Affordable Drugs founder David Mitchell, say they drive up the cost of health care by masking the price of drugs and forcing higher costs on the insurance companies that pass them along to consumers and employers. (O'Donnell, Robinson, Alltucker and Freeman, 4/26)

#### **The Hill: Experimental Drugs Bill Runs Aground Despite Trump, Pence Support**

Advocates for White House-backed legislation intended to make it easier for sick patients to get access to experimental drugs are frustrated, believing that congressional momentum behind "right to try" has ground to a halt. Despite vocal support from President Trump and Vice President Pence, the House and Senate have made little if any progress on bridging differences with each other over separate bills that have passed each chamber. (Roubein, 4/26)

#### **Stat: New York Panel Votes To Lower The Cost Of A Pricey Vertex Drug For Cystic Fibrosis**

In the first test of a new law designed to lower drug costs, a New York state panel voted unanimously to seek an additional rebate for a pricey cystic fibrosis drug for the state Medicaid program. The decision comes in response to concerns that the medicine, which is called Orkambi and has a list price of \$272,000, may cause the state Medicaid program to exceed a cap on drug spending. In a 10-to-0 vote, the state Department of Health was authorized to negotiate with Vertex Pharmaceuticals (VRTX) for a rebate that would bring the cost down to about \$83,200 and match cost effectiveness estimates. (Silverman, 4/26)

#### **The Hill: Schumer: CDC Chief 'Agreed' Agency Can Study Gun Violence**

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer on Thursday said President Trump's new director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) believes there isn't a prohibition on his agency researching gun violence. Robert Redfield "agreed there is no longer a prohibition on the CDC conducting research on the gun violence epidemic," Schumer said after a meeting with Redfield. "That is a good first step but we have a lot of work to do to ensure the CDC initiates this extremely important research in the near future." (Weixel, 4/26)

#### **The New York Times: Why A City At The Center Of The Opioid Crisis Gave Up A Tool To Fight It**

To its critics here, the needle exchange was an unregulated, mismanaged nightmare — a "mini-mall for junkies and drug dealers" in the words of Danny Jones, the city's mayor



— drawing crime into the city and flooding the streets with syringes. To its supporters, it was a crucial response to an escalating crisis, and the last bulwark standing between the region and a potential outbreak of hepatitis and H.I.V. When Charleston closed the program last month after a little more than two years of operation, it was the latest casualty of a conflict playing out in a growing number of American communities. At least seven other such exchanges have closed in the past two years, even as dozens of others have opened. (Katz, 4/27)

### **The Wall Street Journal: Opioid Crackdown Has Patients Struggling To Get Their Meds**

The war on opioids is making it tough for Evelyn Lopez to get narcotic pain medication. A doctor recently stopped prescribing an opioid she had taken for years, saying it wasn't worth possible federal scrutiny. Ms. Lopez, a 53-year-old cancer survivor, also must travel 45 minutes to pick up another opioid prescription because her doctor isn't allowed to call a pharmacy for a refill. "I have to jump through more and more hurdles," said Ms. Lopez, of Hazlet, N.J., who has chronic pain from treatment for her non-Hodgkin lymphoma, which is in remission. "For people like me who depend on this medication, what they're doing is a huge injustice." (Armour, 4/26)

### **NPR: Valium, Xanax And Ativan: More Popular, Still Risky**

Drew was in his early 30s. His medical history included alcohol abuse, but he had been sober for several months when he became my patient. His previous doctor had given him a prescription for Ativan, or lorazepam, which is frequently used to allay tremors and seizures from alcohol withdrawal. My first inclination was to wean him off the medication by lowering the dose and telling him to take it less frequently. But inertia is strong in medical care, and Drew prevailed upon me to continue providing lorazepam at his regular dose for another month while he solidified his situation with a new job. (Schumann, 4/26)

### **The Wall Street Journal: The Million-Dollar Cancer Treatment: Who Will Pay?**

The emergence of genetics-based medicines is pushing the cost of treating certain diseases to new levels, forcing hospitals and health insurers to reckon with how to cover total costs per patient approaching a million dollars. The therapies deliver new genes or genetically altered cells to tackle some of the hardest-to-treat diseases, including in children. They come at a high price: Novartis AG listed its newly approved cell therapy for cancer at \$475,000, while Gilead Sciences Inc. priced its rival drug at \$373,000. (Rockoff, 4/26)

### **The Associated Press: More Kids Have Autism, Better Diagnosis May Be The Reason**

The government estimates that autism is becoming more common, but it's only a small

increase and some experts think it can be largely explained by better diagnosing of minority children. About 1 in 59 U.S. children were identified as having autism in 2014, according to a Thursday report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that focused on 8-year-old children. That's up from 1 in 68 children in both 2010 and 2012. (4/26)

**Los Angeles Times: Here's Why The Apparent Increase In Autism Spectrum Disorders May Be Good For U.S. Children**

Normally, health officials would prefer to see less of a disease, not more of it. But in this case, the higher number is probably a sign that more children of color who are on the autism spectrum are being recognized as such and getting services to help them, according to a report published Thursday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The data come from the CDC's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network. ADDM researchers pore over medical reports from pediatric clinics, neurologists, child psychologists, speech pathologists and physical therapists, as well as records of special education services provided through public schools. (Kaplan, 4/26)

**The New York Times: E. Coli Flare-Up Is Largest Multistate Outbreak Since 2006**

A recent spate of infections linked to romaine lettuce is now the largest multistate food-borne E. coli outbreak since 2006, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. At least 84 people were infected in 19 states between mid-March and mid-April, the C.D.C. announced Wednesday, adding more than two dozen cases to its previous count. Because of the time it takes for an illness to reach the agency's attention, illnesses contracted after April 5 may not yet have been reported, the agency said. (Chokshi, 4/26)

**Los Angeles Times: For Firefighters Who Worked In World Trade Center Rubble, The Future Includes A Heightened Risk Of Cancer**

It's been nearly 16 years since cleanup work officially ended at New York City's ground zero, but the health effects for rescue and recovery workers are still making themselves known. Two studies published Thursday in the journal JAMA Oncology suggest that the firefighters who came to lower Manhattan after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center face a heightened risk of cancer — and will continue to do so for years to come. (Kaplan, 4/26)

**The Washington Post: Why Surgeons Amputated A 7-Year-Old's Leg And Reattached It The Wrong Way**

Not long before her seventh birthday, Amelia Eldred, a small dancer with big dreams of performing on stage, received a devastating diagnosis. Doctors discovered a 10-centimeter tumor in the femur in her left leg — and it had broken the bone, according to

Birmingham Live. When the tumor did not respond to chemotherapy, doctors told her parents that the limb would need to be amputated, but they had a solution to help the active child maintain her mobility, according to the British news site. (Bever, 4/26)

**Stat: He Was A Tuskegee Study Architect. Should A College Expunge His Name?**

Dr. Thomas Parran Jr., whose name graces the main building of the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health, has also been called an architect of the syphilis experiments on black men and women in Tuskegee, Ala. While he was surgeon general, he was also aware that U.S. public health researchers were intentionally infecting with syphilis Guatemalan people who were mentally ill or in prison, in the name of research. Now, under pressure from students who say Parran's role in these experiments shows his disregard for human lives, the university is grappling with whether to strip his name from the building, and by default, the school he helped found after decades of public service. (Satyanarayana, 4/27)

**Los Angeles Times: The Shape, Not Size, Of Our Ancestors' Brains May Have Helped Them Outlast Neanderthals**

For more than 200,000 years, Neanderthals successfully occupied the cold, dark forests and shores of Europe. Then early humans came along. Archaeological evidence suggests that human migrants from Africa arrived on the European continent around 40,000 years ago. About that same time, the Neanderthals all died off. (Netburn, 4/27)

**The New York Times: Caffeine During Pregnancy Tied To Overweight Offspring**

Consuming caffeine during pregnancy may increase the risk for obesity in childhood, researchers report. A Norwegian study, in BMJ Open, involved 50,943 mother-infant pairs. The mothers reported their caffeine intake at 22 weeks of pregnancy, and the researchers followed their children over the next eight years. After adjusting for other variables, the scientists found that compared with the children of women who consumed less than 50 milligrams of caffeine a day, those whose mothers had 50 to 199 milligrams were only slightly more likely to be overweight at ages 3 through 8 years. (A cup of brewed coffee contains about 100 to 150 milligrams of caffeine.) (Bakalar, 4/26)

**Stat: What Does The Golden State Killer Arrest Mean For Genetic Privacy?**

The identity of one of California's most notorious serial killers had been a mystery for decades — until this week, when law enforcement arrested a suspect. Investigators revealed on Thursday that they made the breakthrough using a remarkable tool: a commercial genealogy website. The unusual manner in which the Golden State Killer case was cracked has sparked wonderment — as well as privacy concerns about how law enforcement can and does use the genetic information that consumers give up to

genetic testing companies. That's because companies generally say on their websites that a customer's genetic information can be shared with law enforcement if demanded with a warrant. (Robbins, 4/26)

**The Associated Press: A Look At DNA Testing That ID'd A Suspected Serial Killer**  
Joseph James DeAngelo, who authorities suspect is the so-called Golden State Killer responsible for at least a dozen murders and 50 rapes in the 1970s and 80s, was arrested more than three decades after the last killing with the help of information from an online genealogical site. Investigators haven't disclosed many key elements about how and why they took this very unusual step to find a suspect. Here's a look at the case and some of the questions surrounding it. (Balsamo, 4/27)

**The New York Times: Do Serial Killers Just Stop? Yes, Sometimes**  
The Golden State Killer's barrage of rapes and murders began in a gold mining area east of Sacramento in 1976. By 1986, it seemed to have stopped. Why? With the arrest Tuesday of Joseph James DeAngelo, 72, who has been charged so far with eight counts of murder, more than 30 years had passed since the last episode in the series. That long period of quiescence seems to fly in the face of the popular belief that serial rapists and killers are incapable of stopping. (Hoffman, 4/26)

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# Kaiser Family Foundation's The Latest

May 2, 2018

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## PERSPECTIVE

### Yes, the Trump administration promotes consumer choice – for healthy people

In a Washington Post op-ed, Karen Pollitz examines how the Trump Administration's efforts to promote coverage through short-term health insurance policies, rather than ACA coverage, creates trade-offs for consumers, including lower premiums for less coverage for people healthy enough to qualify, and higher premiums for people with pre-existing conditions who need more comprehensive coverage. ([Washington Post](#))

## HEALTH INDUSTRY

### As Proton Centers Struggle, A Sign Of A Health Care Bubble?

For years, health systems rushed enthusiastically into expensive medical technologies such as proton beam centers – potential cash cows in the one economic sector that was reliably growing. But now that employers, insurers and government seem determined to curb growth in health care spending and to combat overcharges and wasteful procedures, such bets are less of a sure thing. ([KHN](#), [New York Times](#))

## CAREGIVING

### Family Caregivers Are Getting A Break — And Extra Coaching

Across the country, community groups, hospitals, government agencies and nonprofits are doing more to support at least some of the estimated 42 million people who are the primary caregivers of adults and children who have disabilities, are recovering from surgeries and illnesses or are coping with Alzheimer's and other chronic diseases. ([KHN](#), [NPR](#))



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- Postcard From D.C.: Kicking Around The ACA? For Tom Price, That's So 2017. ([KHN](#))
- How A Drug Company Under Pressure For High Prices Ratchets Up Political Activity ([KHN](#), [Fortune](#))
- Blacks, Latinos, Women Found Less Likely To Get The Mental Health Care They Need ([CHL](#))
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- Updated: Medicaid Waiver Tracker: Which States Have Approved and Pending Section 1115 Medicaid Waivers? ([Tracker](#))
- May 9 Forum: Why are Healthcare Prices So High, and What can be Done about Them? ([Event](#))
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## First Edition

Tuesday, May 29, 2018

Visit Kaiser Health News for the latest headlines

Today's early morning highlights from the major news organizations.

### **Kaiser Health News: Benefit Change Could Raise Costs For Patients Getting Drug Copay Assistance**

Since Kristen Catton started taking the drug Gilenya two years ago, she's had only one minor relapse of her multiple sclerosis, following a bout of the flu. She can walk comfortably, see clearly and work part time as a nurse case manager at a hospital near her home in Columbus, Ohio. This is a big step forward; two drugs she previously tried failed to control her physical symptoms or prevent repeated flare-ups. (Andrews, 5/29)

### **Kaiser Health News: Cameras On Premises Let Family In, Keep Germs Out**

Hospitals around the country have been upgrading their neonatal intensive care units to include personal webcams for each tiny patient. It's a convenience for parents — and reduces worries about visitors bringing in germs. The neonatal intensive care unit at St. Thomas Midtown in Nashville is the latest hospital to join the webcam wave, among facilities around the country from big cities to towns that are installing cameras over each infant. (Farmer, 5/29)

### **The Hill: Trump VA Pick Boosts Hopes For Reform**

President Trump's selection of Robert Wilkie to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is being praised by veterans groups as a safe, stabilizing move in the aftermath of the failed nomination of former White House physician Ronny Jackson. Wilkie, who

is serving as acting VA secretary, is a Washington insider with years of administrative experience who has previously worked on Capitol Hill as well as in the Pentagon for two presidents. (Weixel, 5/28)

#### **The Washington Post: Veterans Get Care In Family-Like Home In New Program**

Ralph Stepney's home on a quiet street in north Baltimore has a welcoming front porch and large rooms, with plenty of space for his comfortable recliner and vast collection of action movies. The house is owned by Joann West, a licensed caregiver who shares it with Stepney and his fellow Vietnam War veteran Frank Hundt. "There is no place that I'd rather be. . . . I love the quiet of living here, the help we get. I thank the Lord every year that I am here," Stepney, 73, said. (Kime, 5/26)

#### **The Hill: Abortion Wars Flare For Midterm Election Campaign**

President Trump and anti-abortion activists this week touted recent actions restricting abortion as helping to galvanize Republican voters for the midterm elections. But Democrats see it the other way around, arguing Trump's actions to defund Planned Parenthood and roll back ObamaCare's contraception mandate are going to hurt, not help, Republican candidates on the ballot in November. (Hellmann, 5/26)

#### **The Wall Street Journal: Democrats, Long Blamed For Health-Care Costs, Seek To Shift Ownership To GOP**

In recent elections, Democrats have faced attacks related to health-care costs, with the party being blamed for premium increases on Affordable Care Act exchanges during the Obama years. Now, as many health insurers are seeking to impose double-digit rate increases on those marketplaces, a number of recent surveys suggest Republicans may take the lion's share of the blame, with Democrats viewed more favorably on the issue ahead of November's midterm elections. (Armour, 5/28)

#### **The New York Times: Single-Payer Health Care In California: Here's What It Would Take**

If wholesale opposition to President Trump is one litmus test for progressive Democrats, another — as the governor's race in California is proving — is health care. All the leading Democratic contenders in the June 5 primary have pledged support for a single-payer system run by the state. The front-runner, Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom, the former mayor of San Francisco, has made it the centerpiece of his campaign. "There's no reason to wait around on universal health care and single-payer in California," he has declared. (Cohen and Abelson, 5/25)

#### **The Associated Press: Bill To Create Health Care Price Controls In California Dies**

A proposal to create government price controls in California for surgeries, hospital

stays, doctor visits and other health care services died Friday when it failed to clear a key committee, but the author says he plans to bring it back next year. The measure was a longshot from the beginning, but it drew national attention from health care policy observers. Hospitals, doctors and other influential health care providers lobbied intensely against the bill, which they said would lead to longer waits for medical care. (5/25) T

**The Associated Press: Virginia Lawmakers Return To Finalize Budget, Medicaid**

Virginia lawmakers are expected to finalize work on a state budget that a top Republican state senator says is likely to include Medicaid expansion. The state Senate is set to meet Tuesday at the Capitol. Senate Majority Leader Tommy Norment said last week that the Senate will pass a budget when it meets. And he said it's likely that it will include expanding Medicaid eligibility to 400,000 low-income adults. (5/29)

**The New York Times: Origins Of An Epidemic: Purdue Pharma Knew Its Opioids Were Widely Abused**

Purdue Pharma, the company that planted the seeds of the opioid epidemic through its aggressive marketing of OxyContin, has long claimed it was unaware of the powerful opioid painkiller's growing abuse until years after it went on the market. But a copy of a confidential Justice Department report shows that federal prosecutors investigating the company found that Purdue Pharma knew about "significant" abuse of OxyContin in the first years after the drug's introduction in 1996 and concealed that information. (Meier, 5/29)

**The Wall Street Journal: Wracked By Opioid Crisis, Philadelphia Braces For Tent-Camp Closures**

Beneath a freight railway north of downtown, an estimated 200 people congregate in tents and atop mattresses in four dank tunnels. Many openly inject opioids into their hands, arms and necks. The drug use spills out into the city's row-house-filled Kensington neighborhood. On a recent sunny day, a gaunt man rocked in place on a nearby street, a syringe gripped sideways in his mouth, as three children walk by. Residents frequently find used syringes and say streets have become toilets. (Kamp, 5/28)

**The Wall Street Journal: Judicial Tough Love Helps Addicted Mothers Stay Clean**

It's a sunny spring day in Judge Alan Lemons's courtroom, but it is hard to feel optimistic. A screen next to his bench shows a set of slides, each with a picture of a young mother and a brief description of why she will be appearing this morning. Two numbers on each slide tell the real story: the ages of her children and the number of days she has been sober. Sometimes the numbers are quite low. "Child age: 3 months;

days sober: 81." Several of these women were using drugs while pregnant and lost custody after giving birth. (Riley, 5/25)

**The Washington Post: 118 Pounds Fentanyl, Enough To Kill 26 Million People, Is Seized In Nebraska**

In a record-breaking drug bust in Nebraska, state troopers seized 118 pounds of fentanyl — containing enough lethal doses to kill tens of millions of people. Nebraska State Patrol Col. John Bolduc announced Thursday that a massive amount of suspected opioids seized last month in the state have tested positive for fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine and 30 to 50 times more potent than heroin, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. (Bever, 5/25)

**The Associated Press: Delaware Health Official Warns Of Lethal Heroin Packets**

A Delaware health official is warning people who use drugs that two people have died from suspected overdoses in a 24-hour period involving heroin packets with the same stamp. Department of Health and Social Services Secretary Kara Walker issued the warning on Monday. The department says it's not identifying the stamp so people will not seek out the drug. (5/28)

**The New York Times: U.S.C. President Agrees To Step Down Over Scandal Involving Gynecologist**

The president of the University of Southern California, C. L. Max Nikias, agreed to step down Friday in the wake of a scandal over a gynecologist accused of abusing students at the campus health center. Rick J. Caruso, a member of the university board of trustees, said in a statement that the board had "agreed to begin an orderly transition and commence the process of selecting a new president." (Medina, 5/25)

**Reuters: University Of Southern California President To Step Down In Wake Of Scandal**

"President Nikias and the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees have agreed to begin an orderly transition and commence the process of selecting a new president," committee chairman Rick Caruso said. Nikias could not be reached immediately for comment. His resignation comes three days after 200 faculty members demanded in an open letter he quit as USC faces a rising tide of litigation accusing Dr. George Tyndall of misconduct and the university of complicity and negligence. (5/26)

**The Wall Street Journal: USC President C.L. Max Nikias Steps Down**

Two hundred faculty members, as well as many alums and current students, called in recent days for Dr. Nikias to resign, following a report in the Los Angeles Times about the allegations. That article included claims that for decades, the gynecologist, George

Tyndall, conducted improper pelvic exams on female students and made sexually and racially inappropriate comments. (Korn, 5/25)

**Los Angeles Times: USC President C.L. Max Nikias To Step Down**

A prolific fundraiser during his eight years as president, Nikias pushed USC to imagine itself as an elite global research university and to dramatically expand and renovate its South Los Angeles campus. He oversaw a major construction boom that transformed parts of the campus community and extended USC's ties to China and the Pacific Rim. The departure of Nikias, an engineering professor whose ambition took him from a childhood in a Cypriot village to a post leading one of the nation's top private universities, was once considered unthinkable, and signifies the end of an era at USC. The cornerstone of Nikias' legacy is a \$6-billion campaign launched in 2011, then described as the largest such drive in academic history. (Hamilton, Pringle, Ryan and Lopez, 5/25)

**Stat: Senator, Blocking Subpoena Of Teva, Says Matter Should Be Left To Courts**

Claire McCaskill, the Democratic senator from Missouri, has spent the past 18 months investigating drug makers and distributors to determine what role they played in furthering the opioid crisis. But her investigation into the Israeli drug company Teva — the world's largest manufacturer of generic drugs — has largely been thwarted. For one, McCaskill said, Teva has stonewalled her efforts and refused requests to turn over documents detailing its efforts to prevent drug misuse and audits of suspicious orders for opioids. (Facher, 5/29)

**Stat: Once Quickly Lethal, Multiple Myeloma May Be In A 'Golden Age'**

There are 89 experimental drugs currently being tested in people, according to Biomedtracker, a research unit of Informa. Some are improvements on existing drugs, others have found new ways to target the cancer cells; a few engage the body's immune system in the fight. Not all the drugs will make it through the trial process, of course. But on the roster, there may be effective treatments for the one-quarter of patients who haven't yet been helped by existing drugs. (Weintraub, 5/29)

**The New York Times: Five Blood Transfusions, One Bone Marrow Transplant — All Before Birth**

In the three months before she was even born, Elianna Constantino received five blood transfusions and a bone-marrow transplant. All were given with a needle passed through her mother's abdomen and uterus, into the vein in her umbilical cord. Elianna, born Feb. 1 with a robust cry and a cap of gleaming black hair, has a genetic disease that usually kills a fetus before birth. The condition, alpha thalassemia major, leaves red

blood cells unable to carry oxygen around the body, causing severe anemia, heart failure and brain damage. (Grady, 5/25)

#### **The Wall Street Journal: New Promise For Bone-Marrow Transplants**

Few procedures in medicine present patients with a sharper double-edged sword than a bone-marrow transplant. The treatment offers a potential cure for lethal blood cancers such as leukemia or lymphoma and other blood disorders. But it is a highly toxic and sometimes fatal procedure in which patients' immune systems typically are severely weakened or wiped out with high-dose chemotherapy or radiation. Many patients turn down the potentially lifesaving treatment, fearing that the cure is at least as bad as the disease. (Winslow, 5/28)

#### **The Wall Street Journal: Doctors Face Scrutiny About Defining Death**

What is the definition of death—and who gets to make the call? For decades, physicians have had the authority to declare a person brain-dead—defined in the U.S. as the irreversible cessation of all brain function, including the brainstem—even if heart and lung activity can be maintained with machines. The medical profession determined the acceptable tests and procedures used to make the diagnosis. (Marcus, 5/28)

#### **The Wall Street Journal: Do Doctors And Nurses Skip Hand Washing? Cue The Video**

Hospitals have spent considerable resources trying to reduce the number of preventable mistakes that doctors and nurses make, such as skipping hand washing. But it's so hard to ensure that caregivers take every preventive step every time. Perhaps they need to be watched all the time. (Ward, 5/28)

#### **The Wall Street Journal: DNA Testing Offers New Hope For Infants With Genetic Disease**

While genetic diseases pose the single biggest source of infant mortality in the U.S., many of these disorders are so rare and little understood that an accurate diagnosis can take weeks or months. Some babies don't have that much time. For others, the battery of tests that tend to be ordered adds to their suffering and often still ends with no diagnosis. (Linden, 5/28)

#### **Bloomberg: Your Outdated U.S. Sunscreen Exposes You To Needless Cancer Risk**

Dermatologist Steve Wang treats skin-cancer patients all day at a Sloan Kettering hospital in New Jersey, so he knows better than most that U.S. sunscreens aren't up to the job. The oily stuff Americans are slathering on before heading to the beach this summer probably won't give them as much protection as the products sold in other

countries. Europe, Japan, Australia, Canada: All have sunscreens that do a better job shielding against cancer-causing skin damage, and feel better on the skin, too. (Kaskey, 5/25)

#### **NPR: Do Home Medical Tests For Food Intolerance Work?**

A new batch of startup companies are trying to drive a revolution in lab testing by letting you skip the doctor and test for food sensitivities, fertility, sleep hormones and even vitamin deficiencies — all from the privacy of your bathroom — no lab visit required. Do-it-yourself testing kits cost anywhere from about \$35 for an individual test to \$450 for a battery of tests. Last November on "Shark Tank," the reality show featuring budding entrepreneurs who think they have a hot idea, contestant Julia Cheek hawked her company's home-testing kits to the program's panel of investors. (McClurg, 5/28)

#### **The Wall Street Journal: For Scientists Seeking Research Backing, Crowdfunding May Be The Answer**

Scientists struggling to find funding for research may have a new source of money: crowdfunding. That's the conclusion of a new study, which suggests that scientists who lack extensive published research may be better off gathering many modest contributions instead of pursuing large financial grants from traditional sources. (Constable, 5/28)

#### **Reuters: WHO's Congo Ebola Plan Assumes 100-300 Cases Over Three Months**

The World Health Organization said it was assuming 100-300 cases of Ebola in Democratic Republic of Congo over a three-month timeline, under a revised strategic response plan it published on Tuesday. The WHO, which said the figure is not a prediction, had assumed there would be 80-100 cases in an earlier version of the plan, based on information as of May 15. (5/29)

#### **Los Angeles Times: Deep Brain Stimulation May Offer Treatment For Type 2 Diabetes, Study Suggests**

A surprising (but welcome) side effect of a therapy for obsessive-compulsive disorder may pave the way for a new approach to treating type 2 diabetes = 2 and offer new insights into the links between obesity and the metabolic disease that afflicts close to 1 in 10 American adults. The therapy in question is deep brain stimulation of the nucleus accumbens, a structure best known for its role in motivation, reward and addiction. It now appears that deep brain stimulation also increases the liver's and muscles' ability to take up and use insulin, researchers reported this week. (Healy, 5/26)

#### **The Wall Street Journal: After Santa Fe School Shooting, Texas Town Grapples With Bullying**

Santa Fe, Texas—As this grieving town searches for answers about a mass shooting



by a 17-year-old student, an emotional and divisive debate has emerged over bullying at the high school where the rampage took place. The alleged shooter's father, Antonios Pagourtzis, said his son—a quiet former football player known for wearing a trench coat to school—had faced bullying and said he believed that was part of the trigger for the May 18 attack, which left 10 dead and 13 wounded. As students return to school Tuesday for the first time after the shooting, some here say bullying has long been a problem at this rural Texas town's lone high school, but others don't recall the suspected shooter, Dimitrios Pagourtzis, being picked on by his peers at all. (Hobbs, Frosch and Calvert, 5/29)

#### **The New York Times: In Elderly Hands, Firearms Can Be Even Deadlier**

Barbara Herrington, a geriatric care manager in Polk County, Fla., was calling on a 72-year-old woman with dementia and a long history of alcoholism. Ms. Herrington knew her client would be angry that morning. Her daughter had taken the car away the day before because her mother was ignoring a neurologist's instructions to stop driving and was heading out at night to buy liquor. (Span, 5/25)

#### **The Washington Post: Why It's So Dangerous To Leave A Kid In A Hot Parked Car**

It's well known that a car parked outside on a hot summer's day can turn into a scorching oven. But how much time does it take for the inside of a car to heat up to deadly temperatures? The answer can be a matter of life and death. Every year in the United States, an average of 37 children die after being left in hot cars, according to researchers of a new study, published online last week in the journal *Temperature*. To investigate the matter, researchers studied how long it takes different types of cars to heat up on hot days. The findings were sobering: Within one hour, the temperature inside a car parked in the sun on a day that reached 95 degrees Fahrenheit or hotter hit an average of 116 degrees. (Geggel, 5/27)

#### **The Washington Post: Best Sunglasses Have UV Protection**

The next time you head to the drugstore to buy sunscreen, don't forget to pick up some sunglasses, too. That's because both products work to protect your body from the sun's damaging ultraviolet rays. Wearing sunglasses for protection should not be reserved for sunny summer days, says Dianna Seldomridge, spokeswoman for the American Academy of Ophthalmology and practicing eye doctor at Duke University. There's UV light on cloudy days and during other seasons of the year — anytime it's daytime. "It's important to protect your eyes all year round," she says. (Adams, 5/26)

#### **The Washington Post: Disabilities Meet Helpful Design**

For people with disabilities, design can hurt more than it helps. Clothing can be hard to put on, terrain rough to navigate. Even seemingly accessible developments such as

voting machines and smartphones can present obstacles. So how can design become more inclusive, and more practical, for people with differing abilities? "Access + Ability," an exhibition at the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in New York, tackles that question head-on. (Blakemore, 5/27)

### **The Washington Post: Nighttime Pain So Bad That Only Screaming Helped Made Her Suffer For Months**

On nights that the pain became unbearable, Marion Millhouse Barker would get out of bed, head for the guest room, shut the door and scream as loud as she could. "It helped," said Barker, recalling the strategies she devised to cope with the stabbing sensation on the right side of her rib cage that left her doubled over. "I have a high pain tolerance," she said, but this pain proved to be more excruciating than unmedicated childbirth or acute appendicitis. (Boodman, 5/26)

### **The Wall Street Journal: For Those With Dementia, Help From Technology**

Technology promises to make it easier for people with dementia to live independently for longer and stay connected with family and friends. Home sensors, communications and personal navigational devices—some of which are already commercially available—provide ways to monitor patients and loved ones from afar. Robotics, smartphone apps and some intriguing experiments with tablet computers, meanwhile, show the potential to help sufferers of dementia sustain their social and family contacts. (Wang, 5/28)

### **The Wall Street Journal: Brain Surgeons Get A Better View From Augmented Reality**

Brain surgery is never going to be easy. When a surgeon is removing a tumor, even a slight miscalculation in the angle of entry can interfere with important functions of the brain. But augmented reality—blending digital imagery with the physical world—may help surgeons keep their focus at critical moments during the task. (Toy, 5/28)

### **The Wall Street Journal: The Operating Room Of The Future**

The operating room is getting smarter, more effective—and a lot less risky for patients. Hospitals are investing in new devices, designs and digital technologies that promise a new era of innovation for surgery. The moves are part of a growing shift away from traditional open procedures that involve big incisions, lots of blood loss and long hospitalizations. They point toward a future where more patients can choose minimally invasive outpatient surgeries, with faster recoveries, fewer complications, and less pain and scarring. (Landro, 5/28)

### **The Wall Street Journal: Telemedicine Reinvents The Visit To The School Nurse**

Telemedicine has grown rapidly in recent years. Now hundreds of schools are bringing

it to the nurse's office. School nurses say telemedicine helps them treat students faster right at school, reducing risk of infection, getting the students back to class faster and relieving a big burden on the students' families. (Holland, 5/25)

**NPR: Lawyers Send Mobile Ads To Phones In ER Waiting Rooms**

Patients sitting in emergency rooms, at chiropractors' offices and at pain clinics in the Philadelphia area may start noticing on their phones the kind of messages typically seen along highway billboards and public transit: personal injury law firms looking for business by casting mobile online ads at patients. The potentially creepy part? They're only getting fed the ad because somebody knows they are in an emergency room. (Allyn, 5/25)

**The Wall Street Journal: AI Tools Help The Blind Tackle Everyday Tasks**

Since losing his vision at age 13, Erik Weihenmayer has summited Mount Everest, white-water rafted and climbed frozen waterfalls. But making soup in his kitchen presented a unique challenge. On a frozen waterfall he could tap his ax against the ice to get a feel for its density, but in the kitchen, he had no way to differentiate between cans of tomato and chicken noodle. Mr. Weihenmayer, 49 years old, found a solution in Microsoft Corp.'s Seeing AI, a free app for the visually impaired. Among other things, the app can recognize faces, identify money, read handwriting and scan bar codes to differentiate between cans of soup. (Kornelis, 5/28)

**The Wall Street Journal: Kaiser Permanente Cultivates The Digital Doctor-Patient Relationship**

Kaiser Permanente, based in Oakland, Calif., closely manages the medical care of people enrolled in its health-insurance plan, who use Kaiser's integrated network of hospitals and doctors. Increasingly, that network is also a digital one. (Evans, 5/28)

**The Associated Press: Missouri Hospital Closure Problematic For Expectant Mothers**

The sudden closure of a hospital has left some expectant mothers in the Missouri Bootheel region scrambling for care in an area that already has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the U.S. St. Louis Public Radio reports that Twin Rivers Regional Medical Center in Kennett recently announced that it will close in July. The closure will leave the surrounding area in southeast Missouri without an OB-GYN. (5/27)

**inewssource: San Diego Woman Says Controversial Diabetes Treatment Endangered Her Health**

A San Diego woman says she was put at risk of hospitalization last year after receiving a series of insulin infusions at Dr. James Novak's Trina Health clinic in Pacific Beach.

The woman and her endocrinologist said the infusions spiked her blood sugar to dangerously high levels. The nation has a limited supply of healthcare dollars to spend on drugs and services, which is why the government and health plans require scientific evidence of patient benefit. This is especially important for the 30.3 million people in the U.S. with diabetes, whose medical costs in 2012 totaled \$245 billion. Leadership at Scripps Health started an investigation of Novak's practice when they learned about the incident, the endocrinologist said. And the founder of the Trina infusion procedure, Sacramento lawyer G. Ford Gilbert, faces federal criminal charges related to his network of clinics. (Clark, 5/25)

### **The Associated Press: San Francisco To Decide Whether To Ban Flavored Tobacco**

A major tobacco company is pumping millions of dollars into a campaign to persuade San Francisco voters to reject a ban on selling flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes, certain chewing tobaccos and vaping liquids with flavors like cotton candy, mango and cool cucumber. R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. has contributed nearly \$12 million to the "No on Proposition E" campaign, filling television and radio airwaves and mailboxes with ads urging voters to reject a law supervisors approved last year that is now on the June 5 ballot. (5/28)

### **The Associated Press: 9-Year-Old Raises \$6,000 For Sick Brother Selling Lemonade**

A 9-year-old South Carolina boy selling lemonade to help his sick baby brother has raised nearly \$6,000 in two hours. Andrew Emery wants to help his parents pay for the medical bills for his little brother Dylan. The infant suffers from Krabbe disease, a rare and often lethal neurological condition. So on Saturday, Emery spent two hours at used truck dealership Southern Wheels in Greenwood, selling lemonade and #TeamDylan t-shirts. He raised \$5,860 to be added to \$1,300 raised at a Friday benefit concert and \$5,600 from a GoFundMe site for his brother, currently in a Pittsburgh hospital. (5/28)

### **The Associated Press: Florida Ban On Smokable Medical Pot Ruled Unconstitutional**

Florida's ban that prevents medical marijuana patients from smoking their cannabis has gone up in smoke. Leon County Circuit Court Judge Karen Gievers on Friday ruled that a state's ban on smokable cannabis is unconstitutional. Florida's Department of Health said in a statement it has appealed the ruling, which will impose an automatic stay. (5/25)

### **The Hill: Florida Judge Rules State Ban On Smokable Medical Marijuana Is Unconstitutional**

A Florida judge on Friday ruled that the state's ban on smokable medical marijuana is

unconstitutional. Leon County Circuit Court Judge Karen Gievers wrote in her ruling that residents “have the right to use the form of medical marijuana for treatment of their debilitating medical conditions as recommended by their certified physicians.” (Anapol, 5/26)

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## **Morning Briefing: Summaries Of The News**

**Thursday, June 14, 2018**

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**From Kaiser Health News:**

## KAISER HEALTH NEWS ORIGINAL STORIES

### **1. 5 Things To Know About Medicaid Work Requirements**

The key issues in play when a U.S. District Court takes up a legal challenge to Kentucky's Medicaid work requirement on Friday. (Phil Galewitz, 6/14)

### **2. That 'Living Will' You Signed? At The ER, It Could Be Open To Interpretation.**

End-of-life documents express your preferences for care but may not be binding medical orders. Here's how to better prepare for the unexpected — that your last wishes won't be carried out. (Judith Graham, 6/14)

### **3. Puerto Rico's Water System Stutters Back To Normal**

Efforts to restore tap water service has been delayed in many rural areas of Puerto Rico, but even in the cities running water can be interrupted by electrical power outages at pumping stations. (Carmen Heredia Rodriguez, 6/14)

### **4. Political Cartoon: 'Out Of Proportion?'**

Kaiser Health News provides a fresh take on health policy developments with "Political Cartoon: 'Out Of Proportion?'" by John Cole, The Scranton Times-Tribune.

Here's today's health policy haiku:

#### **PURDUE PHARMA'S PAINKILLER PUSH**

The whirlwind effort  
To get America hooked  
On OxyContin.

- Anonymous

If you have a health policy haiku to share, please Contact Us and let us know if you want us to include your name. Keep in mind that we give extra points if you link back to a KHN original story.



## **Summaries Of The News:**

### **HEALTH LAW**

#### **5. Even If You Get Insurance Through Work, Trump Administration's Pre-Existing Conditions Decision Could Still Effect You**

If the pre-existing conditions provision of the health law is stripped away by an upcoming court case -- which the Justice Department announced last week it will not defend -- it won't just affect people who buy their health care on the health law marketplace. Meanwhile, a group of Democratic lawmakers are demanding more information on the administration's decision, and candidates plan on using it as a talking point in the upcoming midterms.

The Associated Press: Worker Protections Seen At Risk In Trump Health Care Shift  
The Trump administration's latest move against "Obamacare" could jeopardize legal protections on pre-existing medical conditions for millions of people with employer coverage, particularly workers in small businesses, say law and insurance experts. At issue is Attorney General Jeff Sessions' recent decision that the Justice Department will no longer defend key parts of the Obama-era Affordable Care Act in court. That includes the law's unpopular requirement to carry health insurance, but also widely supported provisions that protect people with pre-existing medical conditions and limit what insurers can charge older, sicker customers. (Alonso-Zaldivar, 6/13)

The Wall Street Journal: Get Health Coverage At Work? Lawsuit Against ACA Could Affect You, Too

Most of the attention surrounding a recent Justice Department request to strike down parts of the ACA has focused on the individual market, where people buy their own coverage. But the request would also rewind some protections for the vast majority of Americans—some 175 million people—who get health coverage via small and large employers, analysts said. “Anyone who just thinks this is just impacting the 12 to 15 million individuals with individual coverage is wrong,” said Timothy Jost, an emeritus law professor at Washington and Lee University. (Armour, 6/13)

The Associated Press: Experts: Protections On Pre-Existing Conditions At Risk  
The Trump administration's latest move against "Obamacare" could jeopardize legal protections on pre-existing medical conditions for millions of people with employer coverage, particularly workers in small businesses, say law and insurance experts. At

issue is Attorney General Jeff Sessions' recent decision that the Justice Department will no longer defend key parts of the Obama-era Affordable Care Act in court. That includes the law's unpopular requirement to carry health insurance, but also widely supported provisions that protect people with pre-existing medical conditions and limit what insurers can charge older, sicker customers. (6/14)

#### The Washington Post Fact Check: President Trump's Flip-Flop On Coverage For Preexisting Health Conditions

In plain English, the attorney general's letter means that the Trump administration no longer supports a provision of the Affordable Care Act, a.k.a. Obamacare, that makes it possible for people to buy insurance if they have preexisting health conditions. Sessions, in an unusual step, sided with plaintiffs who had argued the ACA was now unconstitutional because Congress, in the tax bill, eliminated the penalty for not buying insurance, known as the individual mandate. Sessions said the Justice Department would no longer defend the law in a lawsuit brought by Republican-led states, a surprise stance that led to the resignation of a senior career lawyer at the Justice Department. (Glenn Kessler and Meg Kelly, 6/14)

The Hill: House Dems Demand Answers From HHS On DOJ's ObamaCare Decision  
A group of House Democratic leaders are demanding answers from the Trump administration about the role the Department Health and Human Services (HHS) played in the Department of Justice's decision not to defend key parts of ObamaCare in federal court. The lawmakers asked HHS Secretary Alex Azar and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Administrator Seema Verma if their respective agencies conducted any analysis on the impact the decision will have on the country's health-care system. (Weixel, 6/13)

#### The Hill: Dems Seek To Leverage ObamaCare Fight For Midterms

Democrats are seizing on the Trump administration's push in court to overturn ObamaCare's protections for people with pre-existing conditions, hoping to leverage the issue ahead of November's midterm elections as some Republicans rush to distance themselves from the move. The Department of Justice's (DOJ) decision to join a legal battle arguing that one of the most popular parts of ObamaCare should be struck down is being viewed by Democrats as a political gift, with the party apparatus quickly using the issue to attack GOP candidates and rally their base. (Sullivan, 6/14)

WBUR: Flipping The Script — Red State Democrats Campaign On Health Care  
Democrats see the health care focus as a viable defense against the politically-unfriendly territory this year's Senate campaign is playing out on, as well as

increasingly positive views voters hold about the economy and the general direction of the country. (Detrow, 6/14)

CQ: Democrats' Focus On Pre-Existing Conditions Puts GOP On Defense  
Democrats capitalizing on the Trump administration's decision not to defend the 2010 health care law in court are finding that most congressional Republicans are distancing themselves from the case. Democrats argue that Republicans are abandoning protections for patients with pre-existing conditions. Republicans, finding themselves on the defensive, are asserting their commitment to ensuring insurance coverage for sick patients. (McIntire, 6/13)

In other health law news —

The Hill: Insurance Experts: ObamaCare Mandate Repeal Driving Premium Increases  
Increases in health-care costs and policy changes are driving ObamaCare premium increases for the 2019 plan year, according to a new report released Wednesday. The American Academy of Actuaries says that the elimination of the individual mandate penalty and the expansion of cheaper health plans with fewer benefits will contribute to premium increases next year. (Hellmann, 6/13)

Politico Pro: Obamacare Navigators In The Dark About 2019

The Trump administration has yet to tell Obamacare outreach workers when or how to apply for another round of federal grants to boost enrollment around the country for 2019, compounding worries that federal officials will undermine the law during the upcoming sign-up season. The delay in starting the funding process for groups working as so-called navigators is increasing anxiety that they could lose staff or be hindered as they hone their outreach tactics for 2019 enrollment. (Pradhan and Glorioso, 6/12)

Los Angeles Times: Nonprofit Hospitals Are Being Less Charitable. They Say That Shows Obamacare Is Working

California's nonprofit hospitals are providing sharply less free and reduced-cost medical care than they did a few years ago, raising questions about the role and obligations of those institutions in the age of Obamacare. About 170 nonprofit general acute-care hospitals provided \$651 million of charity care in 2016, down from \$985 million in 2011, according to a report due out this week by the California Nurses Assn. (Cosgrove, 6/12)

CAPITOL HILL WATCH

## **6. In Midst Of Raucous Debate Over 340B Drug Discount Program, Lawmaker Introduces Bill To Address Concerns**

The measure from Rep. Doris Matsui (D-Calif.) could clarify the intent of the program and define which patients are eligible -- two bones of contention over the program, which requires pharmaceutical companies to give steep discounts to hospitals and clinics that serve high volumes of low-income patients. In other news from Capitol Hill: CHIP funding, an Indian Health Services bill, and gun control.

**Stat: A Bill Would Keep Status Quo Of Contentious Hospital Drug-Discount Program**  
Amid ongoing debate over a drug discount program for safety-net hospitals, a lawmaker introduced a bill that would memorialize the intent of the controversial program and require the Trump administration to implement oft-delayed regulations about pricing and penalties. The bill arrives as Congress hashes out oversight of the 340B program, which was created in 1992 and requires drug makers to offer discounts of up to 50 percent on all outpatient drugs — for everything from AIDS to diabetes — to hospitals and clinics that serve indigent populations. There are currently more than 12,400 such providers, according to the Human Resources and Services Administration. (Silverman, 6/13)

**CQ: House Labor-HHS-Education Bill To Grab More CHIP Cash**  
House Republicans are set to tap unused Children's Health Insurance Program funding once again, this time to offset spending in the draft fiscal 2019 Labor-HHS-Education bill the House Appropriations Committee plans to release Thursday, according to an aide familiar with the plans. It wasn't clear Wednesday how much of a raid on CHIP was in the offing, but appropriators have been told there is about \$18 billion left in the program that is not likely to be spent. Thus even if the Senate passes the House's separate rescissions package (HR 3), which cuts \$7 billion from CHIP, there appears to be plenty to go around to backfill Labor-HHS-Education accounts that otherwise might face cuts to keep the draft bill within its \$177.1 billion fiscal 2019 discretionary spending allocation. (Mejdrich, 6/13)

**CQ: House Panel Advances Indian Health Bill**  
The House Natural Resources Committee on Wednesday approved a bill that would grant the Indian Health Service greater authority to hire and fire employees. While the bill (HR 5874) is sponsored exclusively by Republicans, it was reported by voice vote and the committee's top Democrat, Raúl M. Grijalva of Arizona, praised aspects of it, especially those aimed at recruiting medical professionals. (Siddons, 6/13)

The Associated Press: A Year After Shooting, GOP Lawmakers Hold Firm On Gun Rights

In the year since House Majority Whip Steve Scalise and others were shot at a congressional baseball practice, mass shootings have occurred at a Texas church, a Las Vegas music festival and high schools in Parkland, Florida, and Santa Fe, Texas. Ohio Rep. Brad Wenstrup, a doctor who helped save Scalise's life last June, has watched those attacks unfold with the acute sensitivity of a mass shooting survivor. Each shooting is jarring, says Wenstrup — calling the Parkland shooting in particular sickening — but his views on gun control have not changed. (6/13)

Politico Pro: Wanted: Doctors In Congress

Doctors want more of their own to serve in Congress. But despite near-constant national debates over Obamacare, drug costs and how Medicare reimburses physicians, they're not having much luck. (Pittman, 6/12)

MEDICAID

## **7. Work Requirements For Medicaid Programs Are About To Get Their Day In Court**

As more and more states start adding work requirements to their Medicaid programs, this court will decide if they're legal. Medicaid news comes out of Kansas and Iowa, as well.

Modern Healthcare: Kentucky's Medicaid Work Requirement Faces Reckoning In Court  
In a case with major national implications, the Trump administration and advocacy groups are set to argue in federal court in Washington Friday over whether the HHS secretary has the legal authority to allow Kentucky to establish a work requirement and other tough new conditions on people receiving Medicaid coverage. U.S. District Judge James Boasberg, an Obama administration nominee, will hear oral arguments in the case, which was filed in January by the National Health Law Program, the Kentucky Equal Justice Center and the Southern Poverty Law Center. (Meyer, 6/13)

Kaiser Health News: 5 Things To Know About Medicaid Work Requirements

The Trump administration's decision in January to give states the power to impose work requirements on Medicaid enrollees faces a federal court hearing Friday. The lawsuit before the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., will determine whether tens of thousands of low-income adults in Kentucky will have to find jobs or volunteer in order to retain their health coverage. (Galewitz, 6/14)

KCUR: Medicaid Work Requirement Could Jeopardize Coverage Even For People Who Comply

Kansas Gov. Jeff Colyer's proposed Medicaid work requirement would create a "catch-22" for some low-income Kansans, according to a report released Tuesday. The report, from the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities — a nonpartisan research organization that supports Medicaid expansion — said work requirements could jeopardize their coverage. Medicaid recipients who fail to meet a work requirement would "lose their coverage," said researcher Aviva Aron-Dine. But, she said, so would some of those who followed the rules and got jobs. Particularly in states like Kansas, that haven't expanded Medicaid eligibility. (McLean, 6/12)

Des Moines Register: Iowa Medicaid Director Says He's Sure Privatization Is Saving Money

Iowa's Medicaid director said Wednesday that he is sure Iowa taxpayers are saving money by having private companies manage the giant health-care program, even though it's hard to say exactly how much. "I think it's important that, regardless of the methodology, there are savings," Iowa Medicaid Director Mike Randol told an advisory council. Randol gave a thumbnail description of how his staff last month came up with a \$141 million estimate of the annual savings to the state from the controversial shift to private Medicaid management. He gave no explanation of why the new estimate was triple the \$47 million estimate his agency released a few months ago. (Leys, 6/13)

## OPIOID CRISIS

### **8. DEA's Crackdown On Opioids Has Led To Uptick Of Illicit Trading On Digital Black Market**

Sales of prescription opioids on so-called cryptomarkets rose faster after 2014 in the U.S. than elsewhere. By July 2016, sales through cryptomarkets in the U.S. represented 13.7 percent of all drug sales.

Stat: The DEA Is Playing 'Whack-A-Mole' As It Tries To Stamp Out The Opioid Crisis  
Four years ago, the Drug Enforcement Agency decided to make it harder to obtain the most commonly prescribed opioid painkillers — specifically, pills such as Vicodin that contain hydrocodone. The move worked: Prescriptions for hydrocodone-based opioids fell by a whopping 26 percent between June 2013 and June 2015. But the tactic appears to have created yet another problem — there has been a notable uptick in illicit trading of opioids on the "dark net," according to a new study published in BMJ. (Silverman, 6/13)

Meanwhile —

#### CQ: House Holds Second Day Of Opioid Votes

The House moved into its second day of a two-week stretch focused on opioid bill votes. The chamber on Wednesday is expected to pass several more noncontroversial bills intended to combat the opioid crisis. The House passed 25 opioid bills on Tuesday sent to the chamber by the Energy and Commerce Committee. Wednesday's opioid bills come from five different committees and have a broader focus, touching on topics from support programs to veterans issues. (Raman, 6/13)

#### PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

### **9. Why Middle-Age Suicides Have Become A Chronic Problem In America**

Experts talk about the problems that arise around midlife -- such as health issues, social isolation and financial stress -- that are playing a role in the sharp uptick of suicides the country is seeing in those who are middle-age.

#### The Wall Street Journal: The Mystery Around Middle-Age Suicides

The recent suicides of two well-known figures—celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain and fashion designer Kate Spade — underscore a sobering reality: Suicide rates for people in middle age are higher than almost any other age group in the U.S. and rising quickly. A report released today from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed that suicide rates for women 45 to 64 increased nearly 60% between 2000 and 2016. For men of the same age the suicide rate increased almost 37% over that time. (Reddy, 6/14)

#### Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: Everyday Issues — Money, Jobs — Seem To Be Propelling Rise In Suicides

Newly released data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate a steady increase in the Wisconsin suicide rate over the past 20 years, from 13.1 per 100,000 persons in 1999 to 16.5 per 100,000 persons in 2016 — a jump of more than 25 percent. This trend parallels the national suicide rate, which has increased by 25.2 percent during that same period. (Weissmann, 6/14)

#### The New York Times: 6 Therapists, Psychiatrists And Counselors Talk About Treating The Suicidal

Last week provided two grim case studies in how fans, friends and family react to the suicides of beloved celebrities. It also provided a view into something far more obscure:

the insights of mental health workers who are on the front line of America's suicide crisis. As news of Kate Spade and Anthony Bourdain's suicides emerged last week, mental health workers took to The New York Times's comment section to describe what the crisis looks like to them. (Tessier, 6/13)

NPR: Suicide Rates In The U.S. Are Climbing Faster Among Women Than Men  
The number of people dying by suicide in the United States has risen by about 30 percent in the past two decades. And while the majority of suicide-related deaths today are among boys and men, a study published Thursday by the National Center for Health Statistics finds that the number of girls and women taking their own lives is rising. "Typically there's between three and three times as many suicides among males as among females," says Dr. Holly Hedegaard, a medical epidemiologist at the NCHS and the main author of the new study. In 2016, about 21 boys or men out of 100,000 took their own lives. On the other hand, just six girls or women out of 100,000 died by suicide that year. (Chatterjee, 6/14)

## **10. The Paper Touting Benefits Of Mediterranean Diet Was Just Retracted. But That Doesn't Mean It Was Wrong.**

There were flaws found in the way the study was conducted, as it is hard to clinically test the benefits of any specific diet, but many experts are still putting stock in the findings.

The New York Times: That Huge Mediterranean Diet Study Was Flawed. But Was It Wrong?

The study was a landmark, one of the few attempts to rigorously evaluate a particular diet. And the results were striking: A Mediterranean diet, with abundant vegetables and fruit, can slash the risk of heart attacks and strokes. But now that trial, published in the New England Journal of Medicine in 2013, has come under fire. The authors retracted their original paper on Wednesday and published an unusual "re-analysis" of their data in the same journal. (Kolata, 6/13)

NPR: New England Journal Of Medicine Retracts And Replaces Mediterranean Diet Study

The revised paper says only that people eating the Mediterranean diet had fewer strokes and heart attacks, not, as the original paper claimed, that the diet was the direct cause of those health benefits. Of course, a change in one paper — even a high-profile one — doesn't mean that researchers have lost faith in the benefits of the Mediterranean diet. "I don't know anybody who would turn around from this and say, 'Now that this has been revealed, we should all eat cotton candy and turn away from



the Mediterranean diet,' " says David Allison, dean of the School of Public Health at Indiana University in Bloomington. (McCook, 6/13)

The Associated Press: Science Says: What Happens When Researchers Make Mistakes

A top medical journal is correcting five studies and republishing a sixth after a British doctor scrutinized thousands of reports in eight journals over more than a decade and questioned some of their methods. The editor of the New England Journal of Medicine says no conclusions changed, and that the corrections it published Wednesday should raise public trust in science, not erode it. (Marchione, 6/13)

## **11. This Scientist's 'Reason To Live'? Helping Others Fight The Disease That Has Ravaged His Body**

Rahul Desikan had just begun the biggest study ever of the genetics of ALS when he himself was diagnosed with the disease. Now he's continuing his research even as the condition takes its toll on his health. In other public health news: cellular recycling, JUUL, fertility treatments, IBM's Watson, gang violence, and living wills.

The Washington Post: Devastated By ALS, Trying To Save Others

Rahul Desikan sits at his dining room table, a large computer screen before him, and works on his latest scientific paper. He types a single letter, then another, then another. For a man in a hurry, desperately trying to rid the world of terrible diseases, it's an excruciatingly slow process. Using a special mouse strapped to his forehead that detects his smallest movement, Desikan moves a cursor around an on-screen keyboard. When he finds the letter he wants, he clicks a button with his right thumb, and it appears in a white space to the side. Repeating the process over and over, he debates research ideas with colleagues, analyzes reams of data and competes for grants. He types so much that he occasionally wears out the clicker. (McGinley, 6/13)

Stat: Is It Time To Target Autophagy To Treat Disease?

Agrowing number of small companies and a few large drug makers are taking a serious look at co-opting cellular recycling, or autophagy, as a way to treat disease. Cells use this process, whose Greek roots mean = 2self-eating," to clear damaged proteins, adapt to starvation, or fight infection, all by digesting their own contents. When autophagy= 2s essential genes are mutated and the process goes wrong, diseases from cancer to inflammatory bowel disease to Parkinson's can result. (Cooney, 6/14)

Politico: Pulse Check: The Rise Of JUUL, With Tevi Troy

Tevi Troy helped lead the nation's health department under President George W. Bush. Now he's helping steer JUUL — the nation's most popular e-cigarette company

— through the Washington policymaking process and public health scrutiny. "Using a JUUL is worse than doing nothing," Troy acknowledged on the podcast. But "if we can get people to switch away from [traditional] cigarettes= 2 there's a potentially huge public health benefit." (Diamond, 6/13)

KQED: Should Insurance Companies Have To Cover Fertility Treatments For Cancer Patients?

It used to be that cancer patients gave up on having children of their own, but with technological advances in reproductive medicine, there are options now. Many younger patients go through treatments to preserve their fertility; they extract eggs, bank sperm and freeze embryos. But when cancer patients want a chance at parenthood, who pays for the expensive treatments? (Dillon, 6/13)

Stat: IBM Watson Health Hampered By Internal Rivalries And Disorganization  
When IBM launched its Watson Health division three years ago, promising to revolutionize medicine, not everyone in the sprawling technology company was on board. An existing group of employees was already working with health care clients and had its own secure cloud to store data, according to two former employees. But the new Watson Health team, with headquarters in Cambridge, Mass., started promoting another cloud, creating what seemed to be duplication — even competition — between old and new guards. (Ross and Swetlitz, 6/14)

The Washington Post: How Emoji Can Kill: As Gangs Move Online, Social Media Fuel Violence

Instead of tagging graffiti, some rival gang members now upload video of themselves chanting slurs in enemy territory. Taunts and fights that once played out over time on the street are these days hurled instantaneously on Twitter and Instagram. The online aggression can quickly translate into outbreaks of real violence — teens killing each other over emoji and virtually relayed gang signs. Social media have profoundly changed gang activity in the United States, according to a new report by a Chicago nonprofit. Of particular concern, researchers say, is how social media often appear to amplify and speed up the cycle of aggression and violence. (Wan, 6/13)

Kaiser Health News: That 'Living Will' You Signed? At The ER, It Could Be Open To Interpretation.

"Don't resuscitate this patient; he has a living will," the nurse told Dr. Monica Williams-Murphy, handing her a document. Williams-Murphy looked at the sheet bearing the signature of the unconscious 78-year-old man, who'd been rushed from a nursing home to the emergency room. "Do everything possible," it read, with a check approving cardiopulmonary resuscitation. (Graham, 6/14)

## MARKETPLACE

### **12. Relatively Flat Growth In Medical Costs Is Steady Yet Unsustainable For Consumers**

"It looks like costs are stabilizing, but they are still going up at a rate above inflation," said Barbara Gniewek, of PricewaterhouseCoopers. "They are still increasing at an uncontrolled level and are ultimately unsustainable."

**Modern Healthcare: Healthcare Costs Increasing At Unsustainable Pace**  
Medical costs are poised to continue their relatively flat growth in 2019, but researchers say the steady trend is unsustainable for consumers. The expected 6% growth in 2019 aligns with the 5.5% to 7% trend over the past five years—a welcome change from the double-digit spikes in the 2000s—but higher costs haven't translated to similar gains in consumers' health and productivity, said PricewaterhouseCoopers researchers who studied employer-sponsored healthcare spending. (Kacik, 6/13)

In other health industry news —

**Modern Healthcare: Kaiser Permanente Partners With Emory Healthcare**  
Kaiser Permanente and Emory Healthcare will partner to create a fully integrated healthcare experience at Emory University Hospital Midtown and Emory St. Joseph's Hospital in Atlanta, the organizations announced Wednesday. Starting in October, the two hospitals will become the primary hospitals for physicians and members of Kaiser, which provided an undisclosed capital contribution to expand both facilities. (Kacik, 6/13)

**Boston Globe: Steward Health Care Voices Opposition To Beth Israel-Lahey Merger**  
Steward Health Care System is joining the opposition against the big merger of two of its rivals, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Lahey Health. ...The merger, which received one approval in April and is pending others, would create a large new health system of 13 hospitals and thousands of doctors stretching across Eastern Massachusetts. (Dayal McCluskey, 6/13)

**Columbus Dispatch: Cardinal Health Sells Majority Stake In IT Firm NaviHealth**  
Cardinal, Ohio's largest public company, announced the sale Wednesday, saying it will retain a 45 percent interest in Nashville-based NaviHealth after selling a 55 percent stake to New York-based Clayton, Dubilier & Rice. Exact terms were not disclosed, but Cardinal said its after-tax proceeds should be \$650 million. (Matzer Rose, 6/13)

## STATE WATCH

### **13. Texans Want State Leaders To Lower Health Care Costs, Consider Expanding Medicaid, Poll Finds**

In a state that prides itself on a less-government-is-better mantra, the findings might reflect changing values: 64 percent think Medicaid should be expanded.

Texas Tribune: Poll: Texans Say Legislators Need To Make Health Care A Priority  
Texans think the Legislature needs to step up its efforts to increase health care spending, lower costs and help more people access services, according to a poll released Thursday. Respondents to the poll, conducted by the Episcopal Health Foundation and the Kaiser Family Foundation, said the Legislature's top three priorities should be lowering the cost of health care, reducing the number of women dying after childbirth and lowering the cost of prescription drugs. (Evans, 6/14)

Houston Chronicle: Texans Want State Leaders To Do More To Solve State's Health Care Crisis

About two-thirds of Texans think state lawmakers are not doing enough to help low-income adults get the health care they need, including tackling skyrocketing costs, reducing the number of maternal deaths and boosting access to health insurance, a new national survey found. And by the exact same percentage, Texans think the solution is expanding Medicaid — a position current state leaders and conservative forces have steadfastly opposed. (Deam, 6/14)

### **14. Puerto Rico Releases Data Showing Higher Hurricane Maria Death Toll**

The information supports other research finding the death toll from last September's hurricane far exceeds 64, the official number. In other news, water service on the U.S. island remains spotty.

The Wall Street Journal: Puerto Rico Data Suggests Hurricane Maria Death Toll Is Much Higher

Newly released data from Puerto Rico's government bolsters a conclusion reached by several studies that the death toll from last September's Hurricane Maria vastly exceeds the official figure of 64. The number of deaths on the island from September to December 2017 surpassed the average for the same period over the previous four years by more than 1,400, according to mortality data released by the government

Tuesday. The figures show the numbers of fatalities in September and October last year—2,928 and 3,040, respectively—are greater than the tally for any month going back to January 2013. (Campo-Flores, 6/13)

Kaiser Health News: Puerto Rico's Water System Stutters Back To Normal  
Carmen Rodríguez Santiago counts herself lucky to have any water service at home. But eight months after Hurricane Maria, the 52-year-old security guard said the faucets in her cream-and-pink-colored house still run dry every two to three days, and the water, when it returns, is flecked with sediment. Puerto Rican officials claim that water service on the U.S. island has been restored to more than 96 percent of customers as of June 6, but the report of progress masks underlying problems. Outside of cities, service has been slower to be reconnect. Flow is often intermittent and the water quality is uncertain. (Heredia Rodriguez, 6/14)

### **15. State Highlights: USC Nabs Two Patents In Epic Battle Over CRISPR Technology; Illinois Welfare Officials Called To Explain Children Being Stuck In Psychiatric Hospitals**

Media outlets report on news from California, Illinois, Tennessee, Minnesota, Idaho, Colorado, Texas, Ohio, Maryland and Arizona.

Stat: The University Of California Will Finally Be Granted Two CRISPR Patents  
In the never-ending saga of CRISPR patents, the University of California has finally put some points on the board, with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office granting it two genome-editing patents. One, granted on Tuesday, was first applied for in 2014. The other and more significant patent, applied for in 2015 but based on a 2012 discovery, will be granted next week. The granted patent, number 9,994.831, covers "methods and compositions for modifying a single stranded target nucleic acid." Next week's, which is to be issued on June 19, covers the use of CRISPR-Cas9 for genome-editing in anything other than a bacterial cell and, specifically, where the targeted region on the genome is 10 to 15 nucleotides, or base pairs, long — the "letters" that constitute DNA and its cousin RNA. Next week's patent is considered more foundational and therefore significant. (Begley, 6/13)

ProPublica: Illinois Lawmakers Demand Explanation On Children Stuck In Psychiatric Hospitals

Illinois lawmakers have asked state child welfare officials to explain why they routinely fail to find better homes for hundreds of children in psychiatric hospitals, leaving them trapped for weeks and sometimes months. State Sen. Julie Morrison, a Democrat from Deerfield, called for a public hearing after a ProPublica Illinois investigation last week

revealed that children in the care of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services are confined to psychiatric hospitals after physicians have cleared them for release. (Eldeib, 6/14)

Nashville Tennessean: Tennessee Governor's Race: Phil Bredesen Talks Trump, Tariffs And Health Care In Williamson County

In his third brown bag lunch across the state, U.S. Senate candidate Phil Bredesen lightly drummed his fingers on the table while he listened to a table of Williamson County women talk health care. The Democrat and former Tennessee governor and Nashville mayor asked the 16 women — 12 of whom identified as Republican or conservative — what their experiences had been like with their families. (West, 6/13)

The Star Tribune: Blue Cross Mental Health Cuts Leave Some Minn. Clinics Struggling  
After the state's largest health insurer cut her pay nearly in half, mental health therapist Kristy Brecke reluctantly stopped taking new clients who are covered by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota. The Eagan-based insurer cut mental health therapy reimbursement rates to control what it said were "unusually high claims trends," a move that has left thousands of mental health clinics scrambling to pay salaries and overhead costs with lower revenue. (Howatt, 6/13)

Sacramento Bee: Here's What A New California Law Says About Teaching Abortion In Class

The law, enacted in 2016, requires school districts to ensure that all students in grades seven through twelve receive "comprehensive sexual health education," including information about abortion. Information presented in class must be "medically accurate and objective," according to the law. Parents must be notified of the curriculum in advance, and have the option of excusing their children from all or part of the classes. (Hubert, 6/14)

The Star Tribune: Federal Agency Faults Minnesota For Inadequate Oversight Of Adult Day Centers

The state agency responsible for protecting vulnerable adults failed to provide adequate oversight over 20 adult day centers, which contributed to numerous health and safety violations. The problems were disclosed in a federal audit released this week by the Office of Inspector General for the federal Department of Health and Human Services. Federal inspectors made unannounced visits to the adult day centers in early 2017 and found that all 20 of the centers reviewed failed to comply with state licensing requirements. (Serres, 6/13)

The Washington Post: Bubonic Plague: Child In Idaho Has First Human Case In The State In 26 Years

A boy in Idaho is recovering after contracting plague — the first human case in the state in more than two decades, health officials say. Christine Myron, a spokeswoman for the Central District Health Department, said Wednesday that the child, who has not been publicly identified, is back home in Elmore County and “doing well” after being treated with antibiotics in the hospital. The child became ill late last month and, earlier this week, health authorities received laboratory confirmation that he had bubonic plague, Myron said. (Bever, 6/13)

**Denver Post: UHealth Will Open Innovation Lab In Denver's Catalyst Health Tech Innovation Building**

UHealth announced Wednesday it is opening a lab and development space dedicated to health care innovation inside the River North neighborhood's Catalyst HTI building. The Aurora-based health care provider will be an anchor tenant at the soon-to-open, health-tech innovation project, according to Catalyst HTI co-founder Mike Biselli. The nonprofit will occupy 17,500 feet there — the entire seventh floor — and have a sign on the front of the building. (Rubino, 6/13)

**Austin American-Statesman: Homelessness, Limited Access To Medical Care Among Top Issues Affecting LGBT Communities In Texas, Study Finds**

A recent statewide study identified homelessness and limited access to clinically competent medical care as some of the main issues affecting members of the LGBTQ community in Texas. Texas Pride Impact Funds funded the statewide study on the broad scope of needs for members of LGBTQ communities. (Quilantan, 6/13)

**Kansas City Star: Pregnant Honduran Awaits Deportation In Platte County Jail**

In late March, Immigration and Customs Enforcement issued a directive that “ended the presumption of release of pregnant detainees.” And just earlier this week, U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions signaled that domestic violence will no longer be grounds for undocumented persons to seek asylum. (Montgomery, 6/13)

**Cleveland Plain Dealer: Money To Relocate Should Now Be Easier To Access For Families Affected By Lead Poisoning**

Families forced to move because of lead hazards may now have an easier time getting money to help relocate. Changes made this month clarify and streamline the eligibility requirements for the temporary assistance grants distributed by the county. (Dissell, 6/14)

**The Baltimore Sun: State Investigating After Man Jumps From Window To His Death At Baltimore Hospital**

Police and state health regulators are investigating after a man broke a window on the 10th floor of the University of Maryland Medical Center and jumped to his death last

week. The Baltimore Police Department responded to a call from the hospital at 22 S. Greene St. at about 9:35 p.m. June 4, according to a police report. Officers found the victim, a 47-year-old man, lying unconscious with a faint pulse, several cuts and broken bones on a third-floor ledge at the hospital building, according to the report. (Meehan and McDaniels, 6/13)

**USA Today: Phoenix Is One Of The Top 15 U.S. Cities In Kids Not Vaccinated**  
A rise in non-medical exemptions by families to opt out of vaccinations for their kids have created hotspots in the U.S. where the risk of contracting diseases like measles are growing, a study finds. The study, published in the Public Library of Science journal PLOS Medicine, found 12 of 18 states allowing exemptions to vaccines for religious or philosophical reasons have shown an increase in the number of kindergarten-age children enrolled in school with NMEs since 2009. (Molina, 6/13)

**Cleveland Plain Dealer: Cleveland Advocates For The Poor Lead Fight Against Possible Farm Bill Cuts**

Local advocates for feeding the poor in Northeast Ohio fear that proposed cuts to food subsidy programs in a new federal Farm Bill could cause widespread hunger, economic and health consequences here. About 50 of those advocates gathered on Wednesday in a mobilization meeting organized by the Cleveland Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition, a nonprofit group currently led by officials from Ohio State University Extension and Case Western Reserve University. (Snook, 6/13)

## WEEKEND READING

### **16. Longer Looks: Being Black In America, A Tale Of Two Epidemics & Designing Babies**

Each week, KHN's Shefali Luthra finds interesting reads from around the Web.

**The Atlantic: Being Black In America Can Be Hazardous To Your Health**  
One morning this past September, Kiarra Boulware boarded the 26 bus to Baltimore's Bon Secours Hospital, where she would seek help for the most urgent problem in her life: the 200-some excess pounds she carried on her 5-foot-2-inch frame. (Olga Khazan, 6/11)

**Politico Magazine: Why Didn't My Drug-Affected Family Get Any Sympathy?**  
Today, the white face of the opioid epidemic has garnered a sympathetic response throughout the country. During the 2016 election, candidates tripped over themselves to be seen as the most sympathetic candidate toward heroin addicts and their families. Candidate Donald Trump, now known for his failure to muster appropriate levels of



sympathy—like when he tossed out paper towels at a post-hurricane appearance in Puerto Rico or forgot the name of a fallen service member during a condolence call, according to the man's widow—had no such problems when it came to the subject of heroin addiction. (Isaac J. Bailey, 6/10)

The New York Times: Scientists Can Design 'Better' 2 Babies. Should They?  
For nine frustrating years, Lesley and John Brown tried to conceive a child but failed because of her blocked fallopian tubes. Then in late 1977, this English couple put their hopes in the hands of two men of science. Thus began their leap into the unknown, and into history. (Clyde Haberman, 6/10)

Vanity Fair: 'She Absolutely Has Sociopathic Tendencies': Elizabeth Holmes, Somehow, Is Trying To Start A New Company!  
Some C.E.O.s told taradiddles, exaggerating the number of users on their platforms (ahem, Twitter); some in Congress say Mark Zuckerberg lied when he told Congress that people on Facebook have "complete control" over their personal data. (They don't.) But all of these, all these made-up numbers, concocted valuations, and apocryphal stories of how a company was realized in a garage, are nothing—nothing!—compared to the audacious lies of Elizabeth Holmes, the founder and C.E.O. of Theranos. (Nick Bilton, 6/8)

Stat: Runnin'

Sean Curtis. Alex Foster. Kevin Sullivan. They grew up together in Somerville, Mass., at the same time OxyContin first hit the streets. They each became addicted to the new prescription drug before switching to heroin and overdosing. "Runnin'" takes an intimate look at a group of friends who came of age as an epidemic took hold and morphed into a national nightmare. The film goes inside a tight-knit community just outside Boston grappling with the crisis. It retraces the lives of friends lost, and one last member of the group struggling to avoid the fate of his boyhood pals. (6/14)

Vox: Why Doctors Are So Bad At Predicting Pregnancy Due Dates

A pregnant friend of mine is due to give birth on Saturday, but as she told me this week, she really has no idea if the baby will come on time, or two weeks from now. Only 4 percent of women give birth on their estimated delivery date. That's because of the natural variation in how long it takes a baby to grow and because of our limited ability to predict due dates. (Julia Belluz, 6/11)

Wired: Inside A Chemist's Quest To Hack Evolution And Cure Genetic Disease  
David Liu's office on the third floor of the Broad Institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts is designed to quiet the mind. A museum-grade gemstone collection lines the walls, interspersed with blue-tinged photos Liu has taken of inspiring science-on-location